EDUCATION FOR ALL AND THE EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF MALAWIANS: A CASE STUDY

By

EMMA CATHERINE CHIWAYA-KISHINDO

B.Ed., University of Malawi, 1987
MHED, Mount Saint Vincent University, 1991

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ABSTRACT

This case study examines the phenomenon of education in Malawi in its real-life context. It is based on the Free Primary Education policy that was implemented in 1994 as a response to the World Conference on ‘Education for All’ (WCEFA) held in Thailand in 1990. WCEFA emphasized education as a human right and key to uplifting living standards of the poor in developing countries.

The research inquiry focuses on whether Education for All (EFA) serves the best interests of people in developing countries, and examines the potential of Malawian schools to prepare children for active participation in a global economy. The children’s perspectives and those of their parents on the role of education in their everyday lives are also examined using the human capital and modernization theories, and Serpell's (1993) Alternative Metaphors for Schooling.

Data was collected following a mixed-mode research design (a survey, interviews, focus group discussions, and study of documents) in 2001 and 2003 from a convenient sample of teachers, in- and out-of-school students, parents, and from archival documents. The findings show that faith in the efficacy of education is entrenched in most Malawian minds. However, the current schooling conditions are inadequate for preparing children for active participation in a market economy, be it at home or...
internationally. Further, the study highlights the discrepancy between proposed educational practices and the lived experience of teachers, children, and parents in Malawi to the extent that the application of a general universal education philosophy such as EFA, while admirable, in some instances stifles people’s resourcefulness in finding solutions to their everyday problems.

The conclusion I draw from doing this study is that faith in education in itself, or a professed desire by governments for education for all, is not enough to help improve the human condition in developing countries. A more appropriate investment in human capital for developing countries should include school experiences that develop skills that are useful even in the absence of paid work such as leadership and creative problem solving skills rather than solely focusing on modern sector jobs which are hard to find in many developing countries.
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PROLOGUE: THE END

This is THÉ END. At least this is what I’ll be telling my mother and mother-in-law in a few weeks time from now. Both of them have been wondering when “this education” was coming to an end. They have been reminding my husband that they “know” that education as provided through schooling, including universities, does have an end – either the person gives up (drops out) or the institution has nothing more to offer the learner. My mother-in-law knows that PhDs take only three years, the way her sons did it in England. Beyond that the university has “nothing” more to offer the student. “Is this the same degree you did in England a long time ago?” she asks her son. As for my mother, she asks her son-in-law, “How come they let her work all these years in the (Malawian) schools if she didn’t have this all-important degree?”

What one gets from education as provided through schools and other institutions and how one uses that education was at the centre of this study. Schooling has to end at some point in order for the individual to have a chance to use that education in their lives. As for me, this is THE END of my schooling although I see it as THE END in Charlie Chaplin’s comic films sense of “end” – an end that simply signals the beginning of yet another episode. I’m afraid, that could kill them. I am content to go along with their understanding of “the end of education” which in local Malawian parlance means the end of a schooling phase like the end of primary schooling, secondary schooling or a basic university diploma/degree program. It also refers to voluntary termination of one’s schooling career (dropout). To a greater extent, this is the way I use the term “education” in this thesis.
Of course, I know that education is not something that ends and that there is so much I still need and/or want to learn in my work and in my private life. This thesis just marks the end of the long six years I needed to get this far and the beginning of more education that may not necessarily have a document like this to mark its end. The participants in my study, however, wanted an education that had a document at the end that showed where and how (the institution and the level) they ended their education and not just the knowledge that they had been to some institution of learning.

In spite of working for many years in the field of education, I felt that I really did not know the point at which other Malawians flash their THE END signs with regard to their own educational experiences, and how they know they have come to that end. For my mother, the end is reached when one has the education required to do the paid job of one’s choice, I presume; while for my mother-in-law, I guess any education that takes a woman away from her family for too long is bad education. So, is it the quantity, quality, or intended use of education that tells one, “You have come to the end of your education,” I didn’t know. I thought I would know by the end of this thesis but I don’t think I know any better except that for now, it is THE END for me. I just hope that my mother, mother-in-law, and my employers will come to see that the six years spent on this education were not lost.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great hesitation that I write this page because I feel that I cannot do justice to all the people who played a role in making this work possible. But knowing how understanding everybody has been over the past six years, it would be imprudent to not write this page at all. I, therefore, give myself the honour to acknowledge you all for all the many roles, big and small, you played to make this work possible. I ask those I will not be able to name here to accept that I have the same respect for you and feel honoured by all that you have done for me, as I have for those I do get to mention here. Thank you all.

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♦ My family in Malawi for the wonderful long telephone and email conversations that made it possible for us to remain connected even when we were conducting our conversations on two separate days, Vancouver being ten hours behind Malawi.

♦ My old friends in Halifax.
• My three Vancouver families:
  • The Curriculum and Instruction family which provided me the space for my academic growth.
  • St. Anselm’ Church which provided me the space for my spiritual growth.
  • The Malawi community in Vancouver which nurtured me and constituted my nuclear family outside Malawi.

• My supervisor, Associate Professor Anthony Clarke, for his sense of humour, good judgment, and his spirit of adventure that allowed him to accompany me all the way to the end of this journey even when oftentimes neither of us was sure which route to take.

• Professor Gaalen Erickson and Dr Karen Meyer (members of the research committee) for being willing companions on this journey and their vigilance in ensuring that this thesis meet the expected standards.

Finally, I acknowledge my own limitations in undertaking this course of study which are responsible in most part for whatever flaws this thesis may have, despite all the good will I received from family, friends, and professional colleagues.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>ADEA</td>
<td>Association for the Development of Education in Africa</td>
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<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAT</td>
<td>British American Tobacco (BAT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNS/CND</td>
<td>Canadian Dollar</td>
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<tr>
<td>CERT</td>
<td>Centre for Educational Research and Training (University of Malawi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency (American)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>COPE</td>
<td>Community Oriented Primary Education</td>
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<td>DANIDA</td>
<td>Danish International Development Agency (Denmark)</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>Distance Education Centre</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (British)</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>EMAS</td>
<td>Education Methods Advisory Service</td>
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<td>FPE</td>
<td>Free Primary Education (Malawi)</td>
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<td>G8</td>
<td>The 7 richest Western nations and Japan</td>
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<td>GABLE</td>
<td>Girls’ Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education</td>
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<td>GCE</td>
<td>global Campaign for Education</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOM</td>
<td>Government of Malawi</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIPC</td>
<td>highly Indebted Poor Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICCS</td>
<td>International Council for Canadian Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>IJED</td>
<td>International Journal of Educational Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCE</td>
<td>Junior Certificate of Education</td>
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WB       World Bank
WCEFA    World Conference on Education for All
WFP      World Food Program
1.1 Introduction

I come from Malawi, a country in Southern Africa that is rated as one of the poorest in the world – 12th from the bottom according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Indicators (HDI) for 2001 although some more recent publications put it at 4th from the bottom (Farr, 2004). Malawi was once a British Protectorate which resulted in English becoming the official government and business language. English is, therefore, a very important subject to study at school together with the rest of the school subjects as introduced by the English and Scottish Christian missionaries. It is important that I mention the poverty status of my country at the outset of this thesis because most of the economic and social decisions that are made by my government are influenced by outside agencies who lend us money or give us grants to support our various social and economic systems including education (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003, p. 504).

Malawi is land-locked and has a high population density with very low agricultural productivity. About 20 percent of Malawi’s land is arable for a population of close to 12 million with more than 50 percent living below the poverty line (CIA-World Fact Book, 2003.) This often means that for some months of the year (December-February), many families subsist on very little food which has earned these months the nick-name “hunger months” (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003).
I came to Canada as part of my professional growth at the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE or the Institute) which was established in 1979 as part of the government’s efforts to improve the quality of education in Malawi. According to the Malawi Government Notice No. 60, 1979, under the Education Act (CAP. 30.01), the government’s overall goal for establishing the Institute was to improve the quality of education in Malawi through:

- undertaking, encouraging, and coordinating curriculum development, evaluation, and research;
- assisting with the training of teachers;
- providing professional help and services to teachers, and
- arranging for the production and publication of teaching and learning materials (MIE Strategic Plan 2003-2008, p. 4).

Over time, the mandate of the Institute has become broader and less specific thus necessitating the need for professionals at the Institute to want to study in greater detail some of the issues that the Institute deals with on a regular basis. These include undertaking more complex research and evaluation studies, participation in educational policy formulation, and responding to political and socio-economic changes that affect teaching and learning processes in schools. These new roles are reflected in the 2000 – 2009 Education Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) which is quoted in the MIE Strategic Plan as stating that the broad mandate of the Malawi Institute of Education will be to “coordinate curriculum and professional development activities for basic, secondary and teacher education”, and specifically, MIE will:
• cooperate with Education Methods Advisory Services (EMAS) in curriculum development;
• coordinate the evaluation of curriculum instructional materials;
• mount programs for continuing professional development of teachers and other educational personnel, and
• conduct and disseminate relevant educational research. (MIE Strategic Plan 2003-2008, p. 4).

I joined the Malawi Institute of Education in 1991 as an educational programs researcher and evaluator. My work and responsibilities were much simpler then as I worked alongside senior research officers who assigned me work and showed me how it needed to be done. If I had any questions or problems, someone else was responsible for finding the answers or solving the problems. These were days of fast-paced learning for me because the MIE was in the very process of implementing a newly revised primary school (Standards/Grades 1-8) curriculum. Soon I found myself participating more and more in decision-making processes which I found very frustrating because often I felt that the main issues were not being addressed and some important questions were being left unanswered. This increased my sense of inadequacy especially when my further attempts to find out more about what was going on were met by standard answers such as, “This is government policy and that’s the way it is going to be”, or, “The consultant(s) (often paid by a donor agency such as USAID, GTZ, DIFD, UNICEF or CIDA) said so and not even our government can change this. They are aware of our concerns but they say there is nothing they can do because they only conduct their business this way”. I wondered how
well we thought we could serve our clients (teachers, parents, children and the Malawi society) by pushing through other people’s agendas instead of addressing their concerns in ways we knew would be most effective and efficient. This really bothered me since I thought local research findings in schools and community should be reflected in the work we were doing at the MIE if we were going to truly improve the quality of education and respond to the educational needs of ordinary people.

1.2 The Day-to-Day Work of the Malawi Institute of Education

To translate the 1979 mandate into action, the Institute’s first task was to revise the national primary school curriculum with the aim of putting more emphasis on subjects that had a direct practical orientation in students’ lives such as creative art, home economics, music, physical education, and religious education. This was in recognition of the fact that most primary school dropouts and graduates leave school without acquiring any useful skills either for their daily family life or for earning an income outside the home. My observation, however, was that these were also the subjects that did not get adequate funding from the government or from the World Bank funds that had been sourced for the purpose of revising and implementing the curriculum. There was also no money in the Institute’s budget or the Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) budget to adequately monitor the implementation of the revised curriculum, let alone to evaluate the whole process of curriculum review and implementation. When I got the chance to go back to university for my doctoral studies, I was very excited because I thought this was my chance to find some answers to the
questions that I was asking and could not get answers from my seniors at the Institute and MOEST.

1.3 Why Knowing How Well the Government Is Responding to the Educational Needs of Ordinary People in Malawi Is Important

As stated above, the overall function of the Institute was to work towards the improvement of the quality of education in Malawi. The commonest measure of educational quality that Malawians have used for a long time has been whether the school experience affords one a good command of the Queen’s language – English (Read, 1968), and if one can get employed in a white-collar job. As a school graduate, one is also expected to demonstrate social responsibility, be politically active, and uphold acceptable spiritual and moral values (Read, 1968; Urch, 1992).

During my school visits to the MIE Trial Schools\(^1\) which were part of my research and evaluation activities, teachers used to tell me and the other members of the Institute staff that they were having most problems in implementing the English, practical arts (creative art, music, religious education, physical education, and home economics), and science syllabuses – practically all subjects. With English, they complained that the suggested instructional methods did not work very well due to the large class sizes since the recommended methodologies were child-centred. None of the classes, especially in

\(^1\) During the implementation of the revised primary school curriculum, the Institute selected a total of 24 schools from all the three regions of the country to pilot test the instructional materials during the development stage. These schools were selected on the basis that they provided a good teaching and learning environment because they had better staffing levels, smaller class sizes, and more qualified teachers since the revision of the curriculum and recommended instructional techniques were based on ideal teaching and learning environments.
Standards (Stds.) 1 and 2, had less than 50 children per class. With the practical arts and science subjects, the teachers did not have sufficient instructional resources, and in many cases, the teachers had never received any instruction themselves in these subjects at school, in teacher training, or during the special in-service education programs that had been mounted by MIE after the curriculum had been revised to orientate teachers to the revisions.

Discussion with the English curriculum developers revealed that the approach they were using was dictated by a UNESCO project being implemented in six Southern African countries which encouraged them to adopt a child-centred approach (as was the case with all the other subjects) despite the fact that class sizes in Malawi, especially in Standards 1-4, were very big and inadequately resourced. (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003; Milner, Chimombo, Banda, & Mchikoma, 2001). Milner, Chimombo, Banda, and Mchikoma, had, in fact, been commissioned by UNESCO to evaluate this project in Malawi and their report formed part of a larger report on this project in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). This made me wonder if under these circumstances, MIE and MOEST would be able to significantly improve the quality of education and meet the educational needs of the people of Malawi because, often, evaluation studies are not necessarily followed by corrective measures. They are almost always done for the donor’s benefit and not for the benefit of the clientele served by the project. The chance

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2 Both MIE and teacher training colleges have always had difficulties with the recruitment of instructors/professional officers for creative arts, music and physical education. Many teachers never learn these subjects during all their school life and yet they were expected to teach them after only a five to ten day orientation program. The revised curriculum also introduced a new subject – social studies – which no teacher had studied before but it was a required and they were expected to teach it after only the short orientation training.
to come back to university for doctoral studies offered me the opportunity to explore this question more fully.

1.4 A Brief History of Formal Education in Malawi

Gould (1993) says that Christian missionaries in Africa introduced an educational system that was a synthesis of Christian religious practices and British middleclass educational practices. He explains that the content and style were similar to the liberal general education of the European middleclass where numeracy and literacy were more prized than the acquisition of technical or practical skills. In Malawi, this remains the kind of education that is considered essential for entry into colleges of higher learning and for employment in the civil service and other modern sector jobs. The present Malawi’s formal educational system is, therefore, very much a product of our colonial and religious heritages.

From the mid-1800s when formal education was introduced in Malawi up to the time of independence in 1964, the formal educational system only catered for a few students who enrolled voluntarily and paid for the education they received. This was because the British colonial government left the responsibility for educating native children to Christian missionaries who did not get much financial support from the government to run their educational institutions. Formal education was made available to native Malawians as part of the Christian missionary endeavour which aimed at teaching local people how to read the Bible so they could, in turn, read it to others as a way of speeding up the evangelization process (Pachai, 1973). Pachai explains that the Christian
missionaries saw education as necessary in facilitating European forms of trade which the missionaries believed were what was needed to replace slave-trade, and for satisfying their human resource needs, and those of other white settlers.

Pachai (1977) says that there were modest expansions in the provision of educational services from 1926 when the colonial government started giving financial assistance to churches and took on the role of coordinating educational activities among the missionaries. These expansions must have been very modest, indeed, because for a population of over four million in 1964, only 3000 students were enrolled in seventeen secondary schools in the whole country, and of these seventeen secondary schools, only four were providing a full secondary school education by British standards (Nelson, et al., 1975).

Read (1955) explains that some native Africans were dissatisfied with this slow expansion of education because they found the educational opportunities to be too restrictive. Explaining why the missionaries and the colonial government were not in a hurry to provide more educational opportunities to Africans, Read says that the missionaries may have been putting the restrictions on the amount and type of education Africans got because it is known that education, whether good or not, adequate or inadequate, tends to set “something in motion in the minds of men ... something which is unpredictable, unaccountable, almost uncontrollable” (p. 113).

Another reason Read (1955) advances for the restrictions on educational opportunities for Africans is the belief that was widely held, probably by both colonialists and native
Africans, that while education might be good for enhancing freedom of thought and action, it may not be so good for the economy, especially where there is literally no mechanization of work. Read gives the example of “educated” Africans who refuse to work on the land and grow food crops even when they do not have white collar jobs. She quotes a Sierra Leonian chief who observed that, “if universal primary education was introduced at once, Sierra Leone would be dead in a year – we would starve” (p. 120).

The missionaries obviously underestimated the problems of having so many illiterate people in a country. The 1964 African government may have had the same fear – that education sets something in motion which is unpredictable, unaccountable, almost uncontrollable in people’s minds – when it did not make access to education any easier than the colonial government. Unfortunately, this has increased the gap between the haves and have-nots even among Africans themselves. The 2002 UN Special Session on Children reports that some of the more affluent members of society in developing countries take advantage of uneducated poor people and make them work for them for very little pay and under subhuman conditions (GCE, 2002). In Malawi the exploitation of the poor by the elite is becoming a big problem as reported in the national papers The Nation and Daily Times of October 1, 2003 under the heading “Tobacco Estates Auctioning People” by Collins Mtika. What has been happening after independence is that the few educated Malawians now exploit their own fellow Malawians the same way the colonialists did by employing uneducated people to work for them on their farms and other money-making ventures at very low pay.
1.5 The Need for Formal Education in Independent Malawi

The pressure to expand educational services for native Malawians increased after independence in 1964 when the new Malawi government realized that it needed well educated people to take over positions that colonial administrators were vacating. Because of limited resources, however, the government planned to replace the colonial workers through a process called “progressive localization” (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). This meant that expatriates could continue to work in Malawi in various positions as long as there were no Malawians qualified to do those jobs. Major educational expansions were most urgent at secondary school and university levels. The government, therefore, built 24 district secondary schools and opened the first university within the first two years of Malawi’s independence (1964/5).

Moyo (1992) explains that, apart from the urgent need for human resource, there was also a general sense of optimism that the African government was more able to move faster towards developing the country economically than the British government had done, especially if more people were better educated. However, up to 1994, educational expansion at the primary school level was slow and mostly done as self-help projects, especially for those communities that wanted a school closer to their homes. Rapid expansion at the primary school level began in earnest in 1994 after a new democratically elected government took office and ended 30 years of autocratic one-party government rule in Malawi. The new government, with the help of international bodies such as the World Bank and the German government through their development agency (GTZ) expanded primary education almost overnight by declaring primary education free. This
was, in fact, a response to the World Conference on Education For All (WCEFA) resolution made in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 which called upon all countries especially those with low literacy rates to make education accessible by all their citizens (MOEST/UNICEF, 1998). The WCEFA saw basic education as essential in the eradication of poverty in the world (WB, 2000).

To implement the Education For All (EFA) goals, the Government of Malawi implemented a Free Primary Education (FPE) policy by removing the requirements for students to pay school fees and wear school uniforms at primary school level, conditions which were said to have a high positive correlation to low school enrollment and high dropout rates (GABLE SMC-EQ, 1999; Hyde, 1994). Milner, Chimombo, Banda, and Mchikoma (2001) say that the removal of the requirement for students to pay school fees and wear school uniforms at primary school level resulted in primary enrollments jumping from 1.9 million to 3.2 million. They note, however, that enrollments dropped to 2.9 million by 1997, suggesting that there was a problem somewhere in the system that affected retention.

The large number of students dropping out of school after the removal of the school fee and school uniform requirement could make one think that Malawians had stopped valuing education highly at the time that primary schooling was made “free”. After all, “everybody knows and everybody knows that everyone else knows that education rules in modern society” (Meyer, 1977). The high student dropout made me realize that education was probably not the whole answer to Malawi’s poverty. Some studies in
Malawi like that by Kadzamira and Rose (2003) have linked school dropout to the general poverty and not just lack of money. It, therefore, becomes an imperative for those seeking means to better the lives of poor people to find an answer to Torres's (2000a) question, "Do we need to improve education in order to alleviate poverty or to alleviate poverty in order to improve education and make education and learning possible?" (p. 7).

From the large numbers of children enrolling in school after the removal of school fee and school uniform requirements, one would say that perhaps Malawians will try anything to alleviate their poverty. It is, therefore, important that educational planners ensure that when Malawians do try education as a means for alleviating poverty, the educational services provided should work for them otherwise, many students will continue to drop out leading to a high wastage of educational resources.

1.6 The Purpose of Schooling in Malawi

The purpose of schooling in Malawi should be understood in terms of the professed purpose of education today. The official purpose of education in Malawi is explained in a document called Educational Policy and Investment Framework (PIF 1995-2000; 2002-2009) which the Malawi government prepared with the help of major donors to education such as DANIDA, DFIF, JICA and USAID, among others (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). PIF explains that education is the main instrument for creating a more egalitarian society, and for expanding and modernizing the Malawi economy. PIF also sees education as important in reducing poverty, improving the health of citizens, and in increasing
agricultural production. Most important, education is seen as pivotal in helping the government achieve its developmental goals. Education is, therefore, considered as an investment which is essential for the future well-being of individuals and the nation. Kadzamira and Rose (2003) believe that in the face of abject poverty, education is not really “an immediate survival strategy” (p. 502). They explain that Free Primary Education (FPE) really arose from a political agenda and, therefore, was implemented to fulfill an electoral promise. There was no real needs analysis done to determine what would be required to ensure that FPE achieved its goals, especially that of alleviating poverty. The previous government’s policy for the development of the education sector was to develop an efficient schooling system of a type and size appropriate to available resources, and to the political, social, and economic goals of the nation (Ngaye, 1991, p. 14). The possibility of achieving this faded as soon as FPE was introduced in 1994 since the lack of preparedness for FPE created an acute shortage of teachers, classrooms and teaching and learning materials in all primary schools in the country. Milner, Chimombo, Banda, and Mchikoma (2001) report that this led to the government hiring more than 18,000 temporary/untrained teachers and 2,000 retired teachers in an attempt to have a teacher/pupil ratio of 1:60. The other problems such as the shortage of classrooms and teaching and learning materials were to be addressed according to the availability of resources.

It is ten years now after FPE policy was implemented and problems related to the shortage of classrooms and teaching and learning materials have not been sufficiently addressed and in some cases, the results have been tragic as in the case of one school in
the capital city. On October 1, 2003, the two national papers, *The Nation* and *Daily Times*, carried a story on the death of two children who were killed by a tree under which they were receiving lessons. The tree fell on the class killing the two children and also injuring seven others. The story explains that the school has an enrolment of 3,200 students with only eight classrooms. Nineteen classes have lessons outdoors (not necessarily under trees). The table below, which gives some basic statistics up to 1997, exemplifies these problems and the 2003 school tragedy shows how slow the MOEST has been in responding to these problems.

Table 1-1: Indicators of Educational Quality in Primary Schools, 1992-1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratio of Students to</th>
<th>No. of students in the academic year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1992/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Teacher</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Qualified Teacher</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Textbook (Chiché a, English, Math, Social Studies)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Permanent Classroom</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Desk</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Kadzamira & Rose (2003).*

Many Malawians may, therefore, not be taking schooling seriously because of the poor schooling conditions and the feeling that education has failed them. Serpell (1993) writing about the situation in Zambia, observes that the expansion of the provision of formal education fails to deliver the promised fruits of economic growth and autonomy.

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3 N/A here seems to indicate that the data was Not Available since it is hard to believe that desks have become "Not Applicable" which is another common meaning of the N/A.
for African nations at the end of its process. He says it is, instead, creating whole populations of “failures”, a situation that is equally true for Malawi. This could be one of the valid reasons for the high dropout and still rather low enrollment rates in Malawian primary schools even after the implementation of Free Primary Education policy. Serpell also thinks that education may have, in fact, facilitated the economic decline of poor countries like Malawi and increased dependency on the West by promoting the emergence of national elite classes who drain the national economy of much of its productive resources because they tend to acquire tastes for imported goods which have to be paid for in foreign currency.

1.6 The World Education Forum (Dakar 2000) and Education for African Renaissance in the Twenty-first Century

The 2000 World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, upheld the Jomtien Education for All (EFA) resolutions to pursue a broad-based strategy for ensuring that the basic learning needs of every child, youth and adult are met within a generation (by year 2015) and sustained thereafter. The Forum’s premise was a broad and comprehensive view of education and its critical role in empowering individuals and transforming societies.

National assessments of the progress achieved since Jomtien in 183 countries showed that the reality of EFA has fallen far short of this vision: millions of people are still denied their right to education and the opportunities it brings to live safer, healthier, more productive and more fulfilling lives, and that such a failure has multiple causes: weak political will, insufficient financial resources and the inefficient use of those available, the burden of debt, inadequate attention to the learning needs of the poor and the
excluded, a lack of attention to the quality of learning and an absence of commitment to overcoming gender disparities (information gathered from http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/wef_2000/expanded_com_eng.shtml on September 5, 2003).

The assessment, however, shows that Education for All is a realistic and achievable goal but that it needs to be frankly acknowledged that progress has been uneven and far too slow. The *Education for African Renaissance in the Twenty-first Century* framework of action was adopted as a renewal of education that will enable Africa to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. It recognizes the fact that education in Africa is often built on a weak physical and institutional base, and that education systems in many African countries are vulnerable to natural and human-made disasters that have hindered progress and, in some cases, even rolled back the achievements already won. These factors, combined with the impact of HIV/AIDS and armed conflict, have continued to have devastating effects on education (information gathered from http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/wef_2000/regional_frameworks/frame_africa.shtml on September 5, 2003).

The *Education for African Renaissance* framework also acknowledges the fact that the majority of the population in Africa still has no access to electricity, clean water and medicine, and that there is need for the 'know-how' in such basic industrial processes as product development, manufacturing, marketing and distribution. A vision of educational institutions, research centres and industries working together, is seen as having the potential to develop indigenous solutions to these problems.
With regard to the specific case of Malawi, it is perhaps appropriate to interpret the World Education Forum and the Education for African Renaissance beliefs in light of Kunje’s (2002) question: whether the benefits of schooling are simply assumed to be there. Kunje believes that primary education in Malawi is in crisis – too few teachers being produced than the system requires, too many teachers leaving the system either through death or promotion to teach in secondary schools, or abandoning teaching altogether for better paying jobs. Many teachers resign from teaching due to poor housing, low salaries, few promotional incentives, and their perceived low status in their communities (Kishindo, 2001, unpublished).

Serpell’s (1993) observations made in a Zambian community also apply to Malawi. Zambia shares borders with Malawi and has essentially the same educational system and its accompanying problems due to our having both been colonized by the same colonial power (Britain) for almost the same length of time. Serpell observed that many Zambian children ignored schooling and used their time on fishing or farming activities which gave them the money they needed for daily survival. Some of the participants in his study told him that their village had many people who had been to school but never got jobs. They claimed that these “educated” people lived like they had never been to school because in the absence of admission to secondary school, the primary school leaving certificate is regarded as a certificate of failure (pp. 10-13).

Admission to secondary school is the “criterion for school success” even in Malawi. It is regarded as a measure of whether an individual’s schooling is worthwhile or not. In his study, Serpell concluded that Universal Primary Education (UPE) (as EFA is called in
Zambia) has, in fact, become a moral trap since it is now mostly associated with the increase of “failures” in many communities. He explains that the majority of children especially in rural areas do not get selected to go to secondary schools. The students blame themselves for not making it to secondary school and develop a feeling that they are failures. Serpell calls this a moral trap because every year, between 85-95 percent of students who sit for Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) examinations never get a place in secondary school (See Table 1 for a Malawian example). He, therefore, says that UPE or EFA or FPE has unwittingly found itself in the business of producing failures and wonders if this should remain the purpose of public schooling given the amount of national resources developing countries are investing in EFA. He can’t see how countries can be proud of EFA if it leads to condemning up to 95 percent of the population as failures (p. 14).

1.8 Estimating Dropout Rates Using Retention Rates

Registration of the birth of a child and school attendance are not compulsory in Malawi. This means that the number of children who should be in school by grade each year is an estimate from census figures and birth and death rates. It is, therefore, difficult to keep any accurate records of students in the school system since children can enter and leave school at will. When children leave one school, they do not necessarily enter another school. Class attendance is also not according to age which allows children to start school literally at any age, although most children start school between the age of five and six. It is not uncommon, therefore, to have children in Std. 1 ranging in age between 5 and 12 years or more.
Kadzamira and Rose (2003) show primary school dropout in two ways. First, they show the number of children that actually come back to school each year in each class (see Table 2 below). Those who do not come back for Std. 2, for example, are assumed to have dropped out even if they could be in school elsewhere. And since repeating a class is so common, the number of children in Stds. 2-8 is not necessarily made up of children who are in those classes for the first time. For example, some of the 189 girls in Std. 7 in 1993/4 may have repeated a class or two and so are not necessarily part of the original 1000 girls who entered Std. 1 in 1987/8 school year.

### Table 1-2: Actual Retention Figures by Gender for Primary School as a Proxy for School Dropout in the First Eight Years of Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Class (Standard/Grade)</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Actual Std. I Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993/4</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>686 543 418 332 250 189 135 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>708 559 437 358 285 237 192 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/8</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>651 527 405 332 264 213 188 175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>656 521 401 325 266 223 212 199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Kadzamira & Rose (2003, p. 508).*

Kadzamira and Rose also use the number of students that are allocated a place in Form 1 (Grade 9) after passing Std. 8 national examinations – the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations (PSLCE), to indicate dropout (see Table 3 below). Students who actually fail the examination as well as those who don’t get selected to Form 1 are assumed to have dropped out. However, many of these “dropouts” go back to school to repeat Std. 8 still hoping to get selected to Form 1 the following year. Serpell (1993)
suspects that school dropout could be used by some students as a strategy for avoiding being labeled a “failure”. This supposes that more academically weak students who would have failed the examinations anyway, or not do well enough to be selected to secondary school, drop out of school before reaching a national examinations class. That way, they avoid the embarrassment of actually taking the examinations and failing them, and create the impression that they would have passed the examinations if they had taken them but they had more pressing problems to attend to. Generally, dropout is highest towards the end of the primary cycle.

Table 1-3: Primary to Secondary School Transition Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Students Taking PSLE</th>
<th>No. of Students Passing PSLE</th>
<th>Form 1 Places Available</th>
<th>Transition Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>96,434</td>
<td>60,418</td>
<td>7,555</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>97,600</td>
<td>65,535</td>
<td>7,550</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>103,833</td>
<td>82,288</td>
<td>7,620</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>116,992</td>
<td>84,956</td>
<td>7,620</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>120,881</td>
<td>74,644</td>
<td>8,004</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MOESC Basic Education Statistics, 1995/96

Looking at Tables 1-2 and 1-3, it is obvious that many children who enroll in a previous class go “missing” the following year, and in the absence of accurate birth/death rates and educational statistics, they are presumed to have dropped out of school. Despite these high “dropout rates”, Serpell (1993) notes that during his study most Zambians, including those who were skeptical of the value of education in their own lives, said that they would send their children to school if they could. Levin and Lockheed (1993) give some insight into this phenomenon when they explain that students sometimes take the primary
school leaving certificate examinations several times because repetition is tolerated due to the belief that passing examinations and getting selected into the next level of education is more like winning a lottery. No student is, therefore, prevented from "repeat failure" thus making parents and their children feel that the causes of failure have to do with individual effort and ability rather than the any school process (p. 132-3). Parents may, therefore, want to give their children a chance to "join the lottery", to try for a "better" life which they themselves failed to have when they failed to get into secondary school, either because they did not complete primary school or they failed to get selected to Form 1.

By the time I started my doctoral studies, I was yet to meet a Malawian, including those who did not have children in school, who did not believe that education, especially in the form of schooling, was worthwhile. What I wanted to know, therefore, was whether they saw FPE, which was Malawi’s translation of Education for All (EFA), as meeting their expectations for an education that could provide answers to their daily practical problems, especially the need to alleviate or eradicate personal and family poverty. I wondered how true in Malawi was what Serpell (1993) says, that for economically disadvantaged groups, the process of acquiring economically empowering cultural understanding at school can also be associated with the devaluing of the original culture of their family and home community. Sepell suggests that cultural practices of economically powerful groups are often emulated by less powerful groups, making the traditional cultures incapable of providing the ingredients for economic progress in the modern world (pp. 1-4).
My guess was that this is true for Malawi, that our traditional culture had become incapable of providing the ingredients for economic progress in the modern world because of the many social and economic forces impinging on us, especially globalization and its wish to "MacDonaldize" the world (Miles, 2001). And yet, it did not seem to me that schooling was really making that much difference to people's well-being. Other forces like psycho-social forces – forces that stop people from acting responsibly even when they have the knowledge to act differently; forces that lead to continuing spread of HIV/AIDS, or the burning of fossil fuels despite global warming and the adverse whether conditions we are now experiencing, were probably also at work here.

1.9 Overview of the Research Inquiry

Given that I had more questions than I could possibly find answers to in a single research study, I concentrated my research inquiry on finding out whether Education for All (EFA), in whatever form it may be implemented in different countries – Free Primary Education (FPE) in Malawi or Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Zambia, serves the best interests of the ordinary people of the country. I was particularly interested in two issues:

- The potential for Malawian schools to prepare children for active participation in the global economy, and
- Children's and their parents' perspective on the role of education in their everyday lives.
In order to understand the complexity of the problem, I embarked on an extensive
literature review in libraries and on the internet (Chapter 2) and, besides the mandatory
doctoral seminars, I attended a number of courses in the Faculty of Education at UBC
that I felt would lead me to finding more information about the issues I was investigating.
Some of these courses were:

- Foundations of Curriculum
- Curriculum Change and Implementation
- Review of Educational Research Methods
- Philosophy and Educational Policy
- Ethnography and Education
- Motivation in Education
- Education Action Research
- Theory and Practice of Program Evaluation

For data collection, I followed a mixed-method plan consisting of a survey, interviews
and focus group discussions, and study of documents (see Chapter 3). I present these
data in Chapter 4 together with the discussion of these data. In Chapter 5, I try to make
sense of the findings in light of my own educational and work experiences. The ability to
use personal knowledge to reflect on the results of a study is probably one of the most
useful attributes of case studies. In light of this personal knowledge and experience, I
advance several suggestions in the conclusion as to what might be the more important
goal for education in Malawi – that of producing leaders who have the welfare of their
communities at heart and are willing to go back into these communities to initiate
development activities as opposed to school graduates who think they have to leave their
communities to look for (scarce) jobs in towns and cities.
CHAPTER 2

THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE CONTEXT

As indicated in the first chapter, the problems affecting education as provided through schools in Malawi are many and complex. I needed to have a conceptual framework that would help me locate the specific elements that are part of the problem and which could throw light on some of my nagging questions – specifically, my wish to know the potential for Malawian schools to prepare children for active participation in the global economy, and the children’s and their parents’ perspective on the role of education in their everyday lives. I hoped that exploring these issues would lead me to some findings that would show whether Education for All (EFA) serves the best interests of people in developing countries like Malawi. This required me to do an extensive literature search and a review of some educational theories that helped me understand more about what is going on in the Malawi educational system.

In my readings, I discovered that many basic educational theories were being applied to implement various educational programs in Malawi. The choice of these programs, however, was mostly prompted by economic and social theories that link education to economic and social development. Two of these theories that seem to run the whole course of the education agenda are the human capital and the modernization theories, especially as interpreted by the World Bank and other international donors who are behind the whole idea of EFA. This made sense when I remembered that education is
considered to be pivotal in expanding and modernizing the Malawi economy and in helping the government achieve its developmental goals (PRSP, 2002). This is more or less the motivation for EFA and the support it receives from Western donor countries and organizations because EFA is seen as the means for implementing the United Nations Organization’s resolution that declares education as a human right (EFA, 200; GCE, 2002).

The idea that Malawi needs education for modernizing the Malawi economy is reiterated in various ways in Malawi Government documents such as the Policy Investment Framework (PIF) and the Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan (PRSP), and in international documents on education such as those prepared by G8 and UNESCO. I was able to find out that this is so because the Malawi documents were, in fact, prepared with the help of donors as part of the implementation of New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD, 2001). The major role of education in this whole scheme of things is, therefore, to produce human resources that can participate in and contribute effectively to national economic development. It is as if increasing the number of educated people in poor countries “automatically” reduces national and personal poverty, increases agricultural production (reduces/eliminates hunger), and improves the health of all citizens. This makes education essentially an investment, a must have “good” whatever the cost.
2.1 General Theories of Education

From the literature, I have learned that organized education as we know it today is a result of repeatedly using the knowledge and information that societies (and individuals) accumulate over time to respond to felt needs. The knowledge and information that seem to have more universal applications and are effective in solving perennial practical problems of a society and individuals across generations survive better and receive acknowledgement through institutions such as schools. This explains why reading, writing, and arithmetic have become the foundation of all education systems. In the case of Malawi, the resources provided for Free Primary Education (FPE) in Malawi, are at the level that just makes it possible to teach these skills – reading, writing, and arithmetic (numeracy) and not much else.

The literature indicates that the reason(s) why particular knowledge, skills, and information become institutionalized in a society is/are not always the same. For example, in Greece, education developed as a result of the need for people to take care of themselves at all times, and to advance themselves at all costs. Education was also seen as necessary for the happiness and success of the individual, and, therefore, the aim of education was to help men better every aspect of their lives, especially by helping them develop debating skills and gaining mastery of the laws and customs of Athenian people (Frost, 1962, pp. 209-212). For Plato, on the other hand, education was for training men in their responsibilities to their country. In Plato’s Republic, men were to be educated to be either rulers, or workers, or soldiers. A good education was, therefore, one that ensured that each person was properly trained for his role in life (The Republic, 1974
translation by Desmond Lee). In short, the selected knowledge, skills, and information were those that the respected leaders of the Greek society at that time saw as most important for an individual to become a good and productive member of his society.

In more recent times, education philosophers from Western traditions like Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbs, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Amos Comenius, Johann Pestalozzi, and John Dewey emphasized the importance of the child in the educational process. Hobbs stressed the importance of training the child so that s/he can serve the state better. Comenius believed that any child could learn anything if things were introduced in age appropriate ways, with instruction becoming more exact and specific as the child grew older. This view was developed further by John Dewey who emphasized the importance of allowing the child to develop his or her own individual talents which could serve the interests of the whole group (Frost, 1962; Rousseau (1993 translation); Tucker, 2002). Since then, there have been many more different ways of thinking about education and its importance in the development of individuals and their societies. The main concern, however, remains the need to find the best way to help an individual to become a good and productive member of his or her society.

In the case of Malawi, many theories of education seem to be plausible and very persuasive. For example, Paul Freire's ideas on conscientização (Freire, 1985; 1993; 1998) seem to explain the rush for education as a solution to our social (and economic) problems. As part of EFA, donors insist that democracy and good governance should be part of the school curriculum. This, I suppose, is because they see the kind of problems that are intrinsic in the Malawian society as similar to the ones that Paulo Freire was

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4 It seems education during this time was the privilege of men only.
trying to address through education. And then there is the whole idea of education as a *centrepiece* for economic development on which most educational programs are initiated, developed, and implemented. The World Bank, G8, and other lending institutions have shown a lot of interest in education because of their belief that education develops the *human capital* of nations and leads to faster *modernization* of developing (backward) societies (G8 Taskforce Report, 2002; World Bank, 1999, 2000). And the fact that developing countries continue to borrow so much money from these institutions even when these debts are crippling their economies seems to suggest that developing nations believe in these ideas which have led them to become inextricably dependent on the rich nations and their donor/lending institutions. This suggests that the *dependency theory* (Tucker, 2002; Young, 1995) is also at work here. However, the human capital and modernization theories appear to be the major theories guiding the Malawian educational system since the need to develop human capital and modernize the Malawian society is what is clearly articulated in government and donor documents.

### 2.2 The Human Capital and Modernization Theories

The human capital and modernization theories are important in understanding the place of education in Malawi both at the national and personal levels because of the government’s emphasis on education as a modernizing tool for the Malawian economy and by implication, a major entry point into the global/knowledge society which is the context within which current educational decisions are being made. The involvement of international donors in education makes it inevitable that education be seen as an investment in people since most of the money is actually given to the Malawian government.
as loans. The international community spearheaded by the G8 countries has made education in developing countries like Malawi as one of its priorities as exemplified in the EFA and NEPAD documents (G8 Education task Force E-consultation, 2002; GCE, 2002; NEPAD, 2001). The international community through various world bodies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, the IMF, the European Union, the G8, and other country-specific bodies such as CIDA (Canada), DFID (Britain), GTZ (Germany), and USAID (United States of America) is making unreserved promises to help finance education in poor countries, especially those with very low literacy rates. The rich countries see education as the only way to help the citizens of developing countries to become self-sufficient, just as education played a major role in their own economic development during the industrial revolution.

2.2.1 Defining Human Capital Theory

Little (1999) explains that the analysis of the relationship between development and education in developing countries has been dominated over the past 30 years by goals that are primarily economic. This has given rise to the need to decide the extent to which individualistic economic values of the market should be promoted through formal schooling. Little says that human capital theory was developed from the economic development of the United States of America between 1920 and 1950. Her understanding of this theory is that people invest in themselves through education in order to generate increases in their future incomes and lifetime earnings. Serpell (1993, p. 1) notes, however that in practice, the investment is actually in public resources as in the concept of schooling because of the belief that it is a necessary social action that
would create a stock of individuals capable of building upon their cultural heritage to discover improved ways of managing their environmental (and other) resources and generating greater wealth for society.

Since reaching a satisfactory level of resource management requires exposing the younger generation to appropriate school curricula, Serpell (1993) says that policy makers should be asking if given the limited resources it is wiser to do the job properly for a small section of the population or to do it poorly for everyone (as has been observed where EFA has been implemented). Arguments for EFA, however, are based on the belief that, even in small doses, schooling has some beneficial socio-economic consequences independent of access to employment such as improved agricultural productivity, better health and nutrition, and fertility regulation in women (p. 16). I personally understand this to mean that poor nations must not “look the gift horse in the mouth”. They should just be happy they have one, that is, as long as our children have a school to go to, we should not really be asking if they are getting the right kind of education in that school. We should just accept that the experience will help the children improve their well-being and expand their knowledge and understanding of their cultural heritage.

2.2.2. Defining Modernization Theory

I understood from the literature that the modernization theory supposes that individuals can be equipped with coherent packages of skills, values, motives, and attitudes uniquely adapted to the tasks of building, expanding, and maintaining their own “modern”
industrialized societies. These skills, motives, and attitudes which are the moving force of economic development, can be molded through the school curriculum (Inkeles & Smith, 1974; McClelland, 1961; Serpell, 1993). Serpell says that today, civilization equals urban life, education equals schooling, while intelligence equals aptitude for school subjects. Acquisition of modern education, therefore, means that a person is better equipped to confront the challenges of adult life, to surmount practical difficulties, to act responsibly and to reflect wisely on the implication of an experience for future action (pp. 101-106).

Lowe (1997), on the other hand, sees the connection between education and modernization as, at best, partial and at worst, largely based on the perceptions of the economic significance of schooling which he thinks is flawed, to start with. He argues that while it is possible for formal educational systems to help set the scene for technological innovation that could lead to economic development, the transformations which have revolutionaryized world and national economies have taken place outside formal educational systems. This is because most of the necessary skills are picked up rather than learned on the job, making the returns to investments in education only marginal. Lowe would rather believe that the alternative is true, that changes in the wider world put schools under tremendous pressure to accommodate labour market needs (pp. 23-28). Lowe also argues that economic shifts increase the differences between social groups and their abilities to benefit from formal schooling experiences. He notes that the growing pressure on examinations was created by the growing demand for formal qualifications in the labour market which forced schools to adopt a consumerist view of
their roles. Education through schooling seems to have become the means to sort out the “sheep from the goats”\(^5\) rather than to prepare students for the world of work. Education has become both the scapegoat for slow economic growth and the key to modernization, Lowe concludes (Lowe, 1997, p. 4).

### 2.3 Modernization and Human Capital Theories and Economic Development

Malawi has bought into the idea of modernization through human capital development (schooling) and the belief that this can be achieved through increasing functional literacy among her citizens. Schools have become extremely important institutions as vehicles for reaching internationally acceptable standards of literacy, and hopefully, for opening the door to economic growth for individuals and the whole nation. Serpell (1993) uses metaphors to illustrate how one might think about education and its role in the lives of individuals and society (see Table 2).

\(^5\) The sheep in this sense are those students who pass their national examinations and eventually end up with well-paid jobs while goats would represent those who dropout before or after failing national exams and become unemployed or “unemployable”.

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### Table 2-1: Alternative Metaphors for Schooling and Implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Role of student</th>
<th>Educational process</th>
<th>School curriculum</th>
<th>Role of teacher</th>
<th>Educational goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. (Production)</td>
<td>Raw Material</td>
<td>Transformation, production</td>
<td>Blueprint</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>Perfection, utility, efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. (Growth)</td>
<td>Plant</td>
<td>Growth, cultivation</td>
<td>Greenhouse</td>
<td>Gardener</td>
<td>Maturity, fruition, health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. (Travel)</td>
<td>Traveller</td>
<td>Progress, guidance</td>
<td>Route</td>
<td>Guide, companion</td>
<td>Arrival, enjoyment, adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. (Enlightenment)</td>
<td>Prisoner</td>
<td>Enlightenment</td>
<td>Escape plan</td>
<td>Gatekeeper, liberator</td>
<td>Vision, freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. (Staircase)</td>
<td>Climber</td>
<td>Ascent, elevation</td>
<td>Staircase</td>
<td>Anchorman</td>
<td>Reaching the top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. (Amplifying tools)</td>
<td>Craftsman</td>
<td>Equipment, empowerment</td>
<td>Tool-kit</td>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Task completion, competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. (Struggle)</td>
<td>Combatant</td>
<td>Armament, defence</td>
<td>Armoury</td>
<td>Armourer</td>
<td>Triumph, survival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Serpell (1993, p. 295).*

I suspect Serpell uses brackets for the metaphors to suggest that they could be called by any other name and still have the same implications on students, educational process, school curriculum, role of teachers, and educational goals. For example, one could substitute the word “production” with “factory” which requires *technicians* to *transform* *raw materials* using a *blueprint* that ensures *efficiency* and *perfection*. All these metaphors do apply to the Malawi educational system in varying degrees. They demonstrate that to develop the human capital, the people must be subjected to some special processes that would ensure that the resultant “product” meets the required level of development (both social and economic) for individuals and their society. Metaphors such as *production, growth, amplifying tools,* and *struggle* speak directly to the human capital theory by suggesting that the human transformation process requires “outside” help from experts (teachers) and uses equipment and resources (buildings, instructional materials) in order to achieve some level of competence and perfection (literacy and
numeracy) that leads to triumph (passing examinations) and assures survival of the individual and his/her society (securing well-paid jobs).

The metaphors of travel, staircase, and enlightenment speak to the modernization theory since they suggest movement toward higher goals, to arrive where “everyone” else is. To achieve these goals, a person or society requires a vision (information-based economy) and a plan or specific route (strengthening the teaching of science and technology in schools) to follow. Extra support (staircase) may be needed to ensure that the top is reached (external borrowing or request for grants to fund national educational systems or personal scholarships). Malawians as individuals and collectively as a nation have tremendous potential for growth and productivity (metaphors 1 & 2), both economically and socially if the correct transformation processes and conditions can be found. This is not an instant, one-shot process. Growth implies some shifts and movement, often guided and supported (metaphor 3 & 4) towards the desired goals. And these shifts often involve some kind of struggle and the ability to maneuver around obstacles (metaphor 6 & 7), especially when one gets to the point where it feels like one is trapped (metaphor 4) and has to find an escape plan. For us (Malawians), our high international debt truly makes us feel like prisoners since our lenders believe it is “our own fault” that these loans end up increasing our poverty instead of alleviating it.

With regard to development, more emphasis seems to be placed on the need to transform society (metaphor 1) in order to make it possible to escape (metaphor 4) the poverty trap. Education is seen as the main escape route (metaphor 5) with those who can withstand
the intense competition becoming triumphant because they become “modernized and developed” as individuals (or as a nation), thus reaping the most from their educational experiences – task completion and survival (metaphor 6 & 7). EFA, therefore, sees education as the best “escape plan” from poverty and for achieving higher standards of living as defined by the level of consumption of Western consumer goods – watching Western movies, eating and drinking Western convenient foods and drinks, and adopting and using Western communication devices (Miles, 2001). This is most likely the reason why the Malawi Government has made education the “centerpiece” in its fight against poverty as it sees science, technical, vocational, and commercial components of the school curriculum as particularly essential in facilitating the economic development of the country ((PIF 1995-2000).

2.4 Relevant Terms Associated with Human Capital Theory, Modernization and Development

Other concepts I found useful in the discussion of the human capital theory, modernization, and development include concepts such as modernity, globalization, colonization, democracy, and wealth/poverty. With reference to modernization, Harber (1989) explains that being modern is holding values that are considered up-to-date, without which an individual or society cannot begin to develop. Harber says that schools modernize people toward individual modernity by inculcating the ideals of planning, efficacy and receptivity to change. Schools also assist in political socialization which teaches such values as patriotism and discipline, and being loyal and obedient to those in authority (pp. 112-129). Before 1994, patriotism was taught in schools through the “four
cornerstones" of *Unity, Obedience, Loyalty, and Discipline*, on which the Malawi nation was said to have been founded – a rhetoric the first president of Malawi loved repeating at public rallies.

This concept of modernization is reflected in Fuller’s (1990) characterization of schooling as “the modernizing project” which he claims often fails. He wonders why governments continue policies that are not successful, and what the root causes and effects are of non-Western countries importing Western (education) models (p. ix). Fuller thinks that schools are used in developing countries as Western symbols to demonstrate that progress toward a modern society is being made despite the fact that “Third World adaptations of the modern state are often plopped down within quite un-Western, pre-modern societies” (p. xix).

Malawi’s aim at “strengthening” the science, technical, vocational, and commercial components of the school curriculum” could be seen as an example of trying to create a “modern state within quite an un-Western, pre-modern society”. Miles (2001) says that a modern society is characterized by large urban areas, democratic political institutions, the application of science and technology to everyday life problems, massive population growth and concentration, and cultural, political, and religious heterogeneity. Miles, who seems to use modernization and Westernization interchangeably, adds that Westernization is taking place on a global scale and is characterized by material standards of living where success lies in material improvement.
In the case of Malawi, donors have been emphasizing the need to democratize the political system, and to ensure good governance and the rule of law. We do not seem to have much help with the other things that contribute to the creation of a modern society. For example, a very small percentage of the population has access to electricity, and many of the democratic institutions are either not in place or if they are, they are not really effective. The problem of intermittent power supply is so bad that during the time I was collecting data for this study in 2003, some businesses that rely very much on electricity such as dairy processing plants were threatening to close because they could not keep their raw materials and finished products fresh. One wonders how much (modern) scientific and technological activity could be going on at the individual and community levels in this case. I only had two or three hours of electricity a day between January and April, 2003 to do my work and those hours were not always the same which meant that I could not always take advantage of the power when we had it. Problems like these have not, however, stopped Malawi from being drawn into the global village where the disparities between the rich and the poor are already enormous.

Torres (2001b) believes that when the term “global” is used in connection with development, knowledge, or education, it simply means “for the South, the Third World, the poor client countries”. She explains that realities and analyses show that globalization is not moving in the direction of a more equitable world, and that economic growth is no guarantee for human (or even for economic) development. This is in contrast to the World Bank’s (WB) belief that globalization is advantageous to everybody.
involved. The World Bank (2000) declares that globalization and information technology offer enormous opportunity for Africa to leapfrog stages of development (p. x).

Personally, I would agree with Miles (2001) who says that globalization is really the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away (p. 144). This could be the major reason why Malawians have to be seen taking science and technology seriously even when they do not have the means to make this happen in reality. We have to set our standards based on what is happening on the international scene, both in the sub-Saharan region and the rest of the world. Appropriately, therefore, Malawi educational goals emphasize science and technological skills even when we do not have adequate resources to provide such skills to our children.

With regard to colonization, and poverty/wealth, Young (1995) argues that colonization contributed to the current state of poverty and dependency of formerly colonized people, especially in Southern Africa since the colonial powers were in this region mostly to exploit the mineral and natural resources of these lands. In this study, however, I was interested in colonization in as much as it explained the development of education and what was taught in schools, and in poverty/wealth as the reason why education is essential for individuals and nations.
2.5 Are Schools Really the Solution to Malawi’s Economic and Socio-political Problems?

It seems to me that for one to question the value of education in the 21st century is like being a heretic during the time of the Roman Inquisition. And so, I begin to question the connection between education and economic development with a little hesitation and not being sure about how to begin. In fact, it seems easier to discuss the “wealth” of developing nations in terms of their poverty levels as there seems to be no real wealth to think about in developing countries except human capital. At least in the case of Malawi, this seems to be the case, given our failure to pay back loans to the World Bank and the IMF which has led us to be members of the unenviable Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC).

Malawi survives on donor aid as has been noted by Kadzamira and Rose (2003). Orjiako (2001) explains that aid to Africa, in some form or other, has been used to improve living and economic conditions but that one must wonder if Africa hasn’t had too much aid, too much advice, and too much intervention which may now be yielding results other than the declared or desired objectives. Orjiako (2001) also observes that Africans have remained trapped by debt and mired in poverty because they feel helpless and obliged to remain laboratories for economic experiments for fear of losing the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) support. He thinks this is what Africans mean when they say, “no one grows rich on a gift”. He, therefore, sees aid as “the kindness that cripples initiative, seduces creativeness to slumber, and replaces
inventiveness and self-reliance with dependency”, and that the poor are really victims rather than agents of the factors that make aid intervention necessary (pp. 68-72).

I suppose when we talk about education for economic development, we are really talking about education that rids poverty from those who have had the education, either from school or through other means. Poverty is one of the biggest social (and political) problems in Malawi, and as Torres (2001a) notes, poverty is so rampant (in developing countries) that the term development has virtually disappeared from political and academic discourse and has been replaced by “poverty alleviation”, or “debt relief” or “combating unemployment”, or “improving the quality of education”, and that the overall spirit is that of “reversing decline” rather than that of “ensuring development” (p. 5). Torres says that this is reflected in the education field by minimalist goals that just supplement the little that is available in developing countries rather than actually ensuring school success and life-long and meaningful learning for all.

In another paper, Torres (2001b, p. 8) asks if the problem is to improve education in order to alleviate poverty or rather to alleviate poverty in order to improve education and make education and learning possible. Orjiako (2001) thinks that as long as development aid remains “good business” since some countries make it a binding condition that aid products, including technical experts and consultants, come from the donating country, development aid will always be motivated by calculations of power, politics, and economics (pp. 74-5). He, therefore, believes that aid programs have actually promoted Africa’s loss of self-confidence, self-reliance, and psychological health. Orjiako predicts
that at the rate we are going, some 300 million people, half of sub-Saharan’s population, will be living in poverty by the end of the decade because sub-Saharan Africa is now the only part of the developing world in which poverty is increasing and health and education are worsening (p. xii).

Orjiako’s prophecy has already been fulfilled by the AIDS/HIV pandemic now ravaging Southern Africa and the whole sub-Saharan region. Southern Africa has also been experiencing famine which was most severe last year (2003), forcing more than half of Southern Africa’s population to survive on food handouts from the World Food Program and other aid agencies. Malawi alone had more than three million people surviving on food handouts out of her population of 10 million. And while there are complex problems that led to this horrifying situation, one cannot help wondering if this catastrophe would have been averted if all Malawians were educated. After all, Lesotho and South Africa were also badly affected despite their having literacy rates much higher than those of Malawi (UNDP, 2002). It is, therefore, troubling for me to see that education seems to be treated as the “magic wand” that can drive all the evil from the Malawi soil. Even with the fact that for Malawians Western education is a major resource because of Malawi’s lack of known economically viable natural resources (Urch, 1992), I think there should still be room to critically evaluate attractive concepts such as EFA before adopting them wholesale.

Urch (1992) says that for Malawians Western education is a major resource because education allows Malawians to seek employment opportunities outside their borders
although the government encourages education for rural development and agricultural production. He observes that Malawians seek and value educational opportunities since they know that employment opportunities both at home and outside are linked to the amount of education they have (pp. 133-4). Earlier, in 1955, Read had also made similar observations about the value Malawians place on education. She explains that during her research among the Ngoni people of Northern Malawi, her research participants strongly believed that education could lift them out of poverty, and that it could raise their standards of living, equip them with skills to enable them to use their natural resources, and to enable them to take their place in the modern world.

Read (1968) says that some Malawians told her that they were attracted to European education because they believed that it was what gave the Europeans so much power over them. They felt that the combination of wealth and education gave Europeans superior knowledge to that of Africans. Africans, therefore, needed the same type of education as the Europeans if they were ever to be able to deal with Europeans on an equal footing. More importantly, they believed that Africans needed to acquire a sound knowledge of the English language. Read says that she told them that the British already knew that Africans wanted to learn English because Africans saw English as the only way to understand white people better (p. 91).

The need for poor countries to be at par with all other countries in the world is best expressed by the World Bank in its 1999 publication, Education Sector Strategy. The World Bank says that globalization of markets requires workers who have better reading,
quantitative, reasoning, and expository skills; who can continue to learn new things fast; perform more non-routine tasks and more complex problem-solving; take more decisions; require less supervision; and assume more responsibility (p. 1). This seems to be the main justification for rich countries to pour so much money into the education of the poor because they have financial interest in the process – creating communities of people with the qualities described above which could be turned into free-trade zones. It is common knowledge that poor countries are preferred for sweatshops for multinational companies such as Nike and Starbucks because labour is extremely cheap compared to their home countries.

It is also common knowledge that developing countries are used for the expansion of consumer markets for Western products as Young (1995) points out, even when people in developing countries earn much less than people in developed countries with the same educational and professional qualifications. For example, when I go back to Malawi, the most I can hope to earn per month from my present job is CN$400. At the same time, I will want for myself (and it will be expected of me by the community as a sign that education has benefited me) to have a computer, a car, a television set, and all the things that represent a modern lifestyle. And since Malawi does not produce any of these goods, these goods have to be imported into Malawi where they cost much more than here (Canada) and other developed countries, both to buy and maintain. This is one reason why the government of late Dr Kamuzu Banda (1964-1994) refused to have a national television station arguing that the number of Malawians who were likely to benefit from such a “massive” financial expenditure was too small to make it a morally
correct decision. This, however, did not stop education from being appropriated by the development agenda because as Orjiako (2001) observes, it still remains big business even when only a few people really benefit from their educational experiences in developing countries. We still had expensive consumer goods imported such as Mercedes Benz cars, and expensive cheeses and wines from South Africa and as far away as Australia.

With regard to the connection between development and democracy, the argument is that a democratic environment enhances development because in a democracy, there is an emphasis on reason, open-mindedness, fairness, moderation, cooperation, bargaining, compromise, accommodation, empathy, and many other values that pertain to social justice (Harber, 1997). And since schools are the place where these values may be learned, the products of the school system would (automatically) be democratic citizens. We are yet to see this happen in Malawi since Western-style multi-party democracy has only been allowed to be practiced for ten years now. The current government and political leaders are all products of the one-party autocratic rule. It, therefore, goes without saying that in a country where schooling is not compulsory, more people have to learn about democracy and how it works outside the school system.

It may also be important to note what Harber (1989) says about the nature of schools. He says that the organizational model of Western education that is operational in many African countries is essentially hierarchical and authoritarian in nature. It emphasizes obedience and does not seem to provide the possibility of promoting democracy because
of its bureaucratic procedures (p. 79). Beyer and Apple (1998), writing about American
schools, add that schools are tyrannical bureaucratic machines that ignore their
consumers (students and their parents) and end up serving the administrators and
teachers. They explain that schools have become more like miniature factories
dominated by concerns for inputs and output, efficiency, and cost savings (p. 248). These
features seem to be even more prominent in developing countries as a result of their
colonial legacy. The Malawi public service structure, including the educational system,
has always been very bureaucratic and hierarchical although more recently there have
been calls for increased decentralization in decision making. A previous study that I
undertook (Kishindo, 2001) shows that very little decision-making actually takes place at
the school level. And even if individual schools were to decide to teach and practice
democratic principles, the problem would still be the lack of models, instructional
materials, and teacher support from educational officials who are not in a hurry to
dismantle the bureaucratic system.

The World Bank (1999) sees the rapid spread of democracy, technological innovations,
the emergence of new market economies, and the changing public/private roles as
legitimate reasons for countries to want to ensure that their people are highly educated
and skilled, and individuals have the skills and information to compete and thrive in the
information age. And yet, at the same time a country like Malawi is being urged to
democratize by the powerful democracies of the world, those same democracies also own
the very machinery that controls our economic fortunes (the WB & IMF). As HIPCs, we
are being urged to embark on cost-recovery programs in education and other social
services which partly explains why FPE cannot be fully provided for. I cannot see, therefore, how we can promote democratic values in the schools which are now fast becoming the very sources of social inequalities. This is one reason why I decided to go to schools I had never been before (schools which were not trial schools) as part of my data collection activity so I could see how “getting educated” looks like to the majority of Malawian children. I wanted to see and hear what the people most affected by educational decisions (teachers, students, and parents) have to say about the place of education in solving their everyday economic and socio-political problems; to see and hear the extent to which Malawians apply (modern) scientific and technical know-how to their everyday life, and to see and hear how much of the concept of democracy is actually at work in everyday decisions and interactions now that Malawi was a democratic country as defined by multi-party elections.

2.6 The Role of Teachers in Making Education Happen

In Malawi, whenever we talk about education, schools are what come to mind first because they are the major channels through which individuals get to experience education as is defined in text-books and documents by world bodies such as UNESCO, G8, UNICEF, the World Bank, and many other international donor agencies, especially those working in the field of education. And because of gross under-funding to the educational system, the government and donors tend to support educational initiatives that are directed to schools. Educational opportunities, therefore, are mostly available to children and young people and teachers play a very important role in providing the educational experience to
whoever needs it. As Castro-Leal (1996) notes, this educational experience often takes place with minimal teaching and learning materials, and in poor school buildings that lack basic instructional equipment and furniture, things that may be taken for granted in Western countries. This is the education that is central to this study; the education that provides the only hope for the majority of Malawians to get the credentials they need to secure employment, or get loans from banks and credit unions to finance income generating activities, and the education through which the Malawi government hopes to realize many of its social and economic goals. Given the gross deficiencies in resources, this education relies very much on what teachers are able to do in the schools to help children learn. It is this education that I wanted to know more about in terms of its contribution to the well-being of Malawians on an everyday basis. It, therefore, made sense to me to also want to know more about the teachers' work environment, especially in primary schools where I had never taught.

2.7 The Malawi School System

To understand the dynamics of the school, I modified Heneveld and Craig's (1995) conceptual framework of the school system to reflect my own understanding of the Malawi school system (see Figure 2-1). This framework shows the basic inputs and conditions that are necessary for learning to occur (make education possible) in the schools.
Figure 2-1: The Dynamics of the Malawi School System as Viewed in the Context of Heneveld and Craig’s (1995, p. 16) Conceptual Framework

Supporting Inputs
- Strong parent and community support
- Effective support from the education system
- Adequate material support
  - Frequent and appropriate teacher development activities
  - Sufficient textbooks and other materials
  - Adequate facilities

Children’s Characteristics
- Good health
- Adequate food and good nutrition
- Good housing
- Safe home environment
- Adequate time for school activities
- High expectations from school outcomes

School Climate
- Positive teacher attitudes
- Order and discipline
- Organized Curriculum
- Rewards and incentives for both teachers and students

Enabling School Conditions
- Effective leadership
- A capable teaching force
- Flexibility and autonomy

Teachers Characteristics
- Teachers’ level of education
- Teachers’ professional training
- Teachers’ experience

Teaching/Learning Process
- High teaching/learning time in school
- Variety in teaching strategies
- Frequent homework
- Frequent student assessment and feedback

Student Outcomes
- Participation
- Academic Achievement
- Social skills
- Economic Success
2.7.1 Supporting Inputs

Kemmerer (1990) says that supervision and in-service education help to increase collegiality and compensate for deficiencies in pre-service training. In Malawi, the presence of so many untrained teachers overstretches the professional resources of MOEST leaving many teachers on their own most of the time. The introduction of FPE has resulted in considerable shortages of instructional materials in many classrooms for both teachers and students. Many schools have no library, laboratory or recreational facilities, while teachers have no suitable/permanent space in the school to prepare their work or interact with each other when they are not teaching (see pictures below).

Figure 2 - 2: Office Space made outside a classroom

Source: ECK, 2001
In the case of city schools, most of them have a headteacher’s office and sometimes, some designated teachers’ work space and storage facilities. What I learned at one school was that quite a number of classes had been taken over by secondary school students (Forms 1-4/Grades 9-12) as part of the implementation of the Community Day Secondary School program. Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs) were started
in 1998 to accommodate the increasing numbers of Standard 8 graduates who needed places in secondary schools. Some of these primary schools had previously allowed distance education secondary school students to use their classrooms for study purposes after the primary school students were done for the day. With the creation of the CDSSs, the distance education students, now turned into regular secondary school students (and their numbers growing), were in the schools for much longer periods and, as the headteacher complained, disrupting the normal school day for the younger primary school students. He said that MOEST officials had assured schools like his that the situation was temporary. Proper secondary schools would be built so the secondary school students could have their own classrooms. Work on the new school had not started when I visited this school and the headteacher expressed his apprehension at the fact that the school committee and MOEST had decided that the new school would be built within the primary school fence because, he was told, they could not find a more suitable place for a school in his area.

Many city primary schools have brick walls to keep the public from making paths all over the school grounds and between school buildings. With the increased enrollment due to FPE, city schools have many more classes without classrooms than rural schools. And because there is no space to grow trees and the ground never has a chance to grow grass lawns, many classes are held in direct sunshine and the brick wall provides "chalkboard" space. Even the teachers find this very hard to deal with.
Many teachers do not stay long in schools which do not have good teachers’ houses, convenient water supply, and are too far from social and health amenities. Also, school communities tend to like teachers whose students do well at national examinations every year (very much like coaching a hockey team in Canada). Our national goals for education, therefore, seem to boil down to students passing national examinations and going on to the next academic level. Where a teacher is perceived to be incompetent, that is, every year his/her students have difficulty with the national examinations, pressure is brought to bear upon such a teacher by his/her students and their parents to improve his/her performance. This sometimes leads to some teachers having to resort to helping their students cheat when taking the national examinations (MOEST, 2000c).

2.7.2 Children’s Characteristics

Children’s characteristics include the type of home and community a child comes from, as well as his/her parents’ perception of the value of education, and their aspirations for
their child’s education. Some children start articulating their own reasons for going to school when they are very young but the eight students in my sample said they started having their own agendas for schooling when most of them were 12 years or older. During my data collection, I became aware of the fact that there were also many characteristics/factors that were beyond the control of the child and/or his/her parents that affect the children’s participation in the educational endeavour. These included food shortages, hospitals that lacked basic medicines for treatable common illnesses, poverty at both national and household levels, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic which continues to devastate Southern Africa and other developing countries. It is difficult to imagine a child who is sick or hungry or has had little sleep wanting to go to school and do well in class.

In Malawi, many children in poverty-stricken families stay away from school because they are required to contribute to their families’ labour needs, or work outside the home in order to fend for themselves as is now common in child-headed households which are becoming a common phenomenon due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The responsibility for family maintenance activities placed on many children leaves most of them too tired to go to school in the first place, and if they do, they are too tired to do their schoolwork. For such children, the opportunity cost of schooling becomes too high for them to persist with schooling especially when this is coupled with low expectations of school outcomes. This may, in part, explain why school enrollment is still low and dropout high even when schooling is free for the first eight years (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003).
2.7.3 School Climate

Some school locations and infrastructure are less attractive to both teachers and students than others. In Malawi, these include many schools in rural areas because they are in communities that lack basic medical and social amenities. There are often very poor communication links between many rural areas and the rest of the district, country and the world as a whole because of poor public transportation and communication systems such as telephones, postal services, radio and television, and the internet facilities. Amenities such as electricity, telephones, or safe water sources hardly exist in many rural communities, while job opportunities other than teaching may be very few and often seasonal. This means that teachers who have other family members that may need jobs but are not teachers themselves, for example, a spouse who is a nurse and there is no hospital or clinic within reasonable distance from the school, may find it difficult to accept a position in a rural school. Generally, urban schools are better equipped, have more and better qualified teachers and often have smaller class sizes. Urban environments also tend to have better health and social amenities, better transportation systems, have safer sources of water, and may be connected to the main electricity supply system.

From a Malawian cultural point of view, a good school in a rural area would be one that is located in a village with enough land for teachers to grow their own food. Availability of land for teachers' use contributes to schools' ability to attract and retain teachers. Also teachers' houses offered by the schools are a big factor in retaining teachers in schools since teachers can't comfortably live too far from their schools due to problems of
transportation. Teachers' enthusiasm for their work may, therefore, be influenced by the prospects of these other factors besides the monthly pay.

2.7.4 Enabling School Conditions

For students, classrooms that do not leak when it rains and have adequate desks or chairs are a major contribution to their enthusiasm for going to school. Insufficient classrooms and furniture in many schools means that children have to sit on dirty classroom floors or outside in the school yard. I learned from casual conversations with children who had left school that this is one of the things they hated about going to school because it always meant that their clothes got dirty on the very first day of school. This was troubling especially for older girls because it meant washing them only to have them get dirty again the following day. They said they did not have the money, water, soap, or time for that much washing of their clothes. Besides, they felt that too much washing of clothes shortens the life of their clothes which was an expense they could not afford easily (see pictures below).

Figure 2-6: Cemented mud seats made under the shade of trees. Classes can resume after a downpour by simply wiping the water off the seats.

Source: ECK, 2001

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Figure 2–7: Girls are sitting on the ground and, therefore, getting their dresses dirty. I did not have a chance to ask whether this was a school rule, cultural practice, or there were just weren’t enough seats and the girls were asked to give the boys the “honour” of occupying the “high” places first.

Source: ECK, 2001

Figure 2–8: Big pegs are sunk into the classroom floor to suspend logs used as seats. The head-teacher demonstrates how this works. The white circles on the lower left hand corner on the floor are made by light coming through the holes in the roof.
Sanitation was also a big problem in many schools. Most of the pit latrines had mud floors which are very difficult to keep clean. But whether the latrines have mud or concrete floors, the responsibility for keeping them clean often falls on girls, and they do this with no protective clothing or germ-killing agents. The stench and the unpleasantness of this task was often mentioned by female school-dropouts with whom I had casual conversations during my data collection exercise as one main reason for their decision to leave school. These girls knew that their life would probably be better if they stayed in school longer but it was just too hard for them to persist.

2.7.5 The Teaching and Learning Process

There are several important factors that affect the teaching and learning process in Malawi:

- Insufficient classroom space that forces many teachers to hold their classes outdoors when it is not raining. When it rains, classes are often combined, or children get sent home. This disturbs the learning process for every child in the school.

- The high teacher and student absenteeism (WB, 2001b) also affects the teaching and learning process.
• Pressure to meet national examination requirements – teachers want to finish the syllabus so they don’t get blamed for the failure of their students.

• Competitiveness for places at each higher level of the education system which creates a sense of hopelessness in less academically-oriented students as they feel they are wasting their time.

• The presence of many untrained or underqualified teachers in schools who “invent” their own teaching strategies. There is need for research to find out what works and what doesn’t when teachers are left to their own devices.

• There is usually very little homework assigned in schools because of the lack of instructional materials. During school visits, teachers said that when they did give homework, they failed to mark/correct it because they have too many students (lack of suitable strategies to deal with homework in large classrooms), or because their leaking roof at home made it impossible for them to work when it rained.

• Very little continuous assessment to help monitor students’ progress. Assessment is often done as an end-of-term activity because it is required by the Ministry.

Figure 2 – 9: Too many children, too few resources – children at a rural school who left classes to come and meet me as soon as they heard a car coming to their school.
2.7.6 Teacher Characteristics and Context

In Malawi, the term "good school" almost always refers to a school where many students pass their national examinations and get selected to go on to the next level of their schooling career. There are three important national examinations that all students who do all the 12 classes (Standard 1-8 and Form 1-4 which is equivalent to Grade 1-12 in North America) have to take:

- Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) examinations taken in Standard 8 (Grade 8) which are the basis for students to be selected to go to secondary school,
- Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) examinations taken in Form 2 (Grade 10) which weed out those students who are not likely to do well at their Form 4 (Grade 12) examinations, and the
• Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) examinations taken at the end of Form 4 which may qualify a student for the university entrance examinations and admission to other post-secondary academic or professional training institutions.

From the literature, it would seem that teacher characteristics, especially academic qualifications and professional training, are an important factor in students doing well on these examinations. Kemmerer (1990) says that teacher characteristics include the teacher's age, sex, academic qualification(s), professional training, teaching experiences, and even his/her temperament and sense of self-esteem. She explains that academic qualifications and professional training affect teachers' understanding of instructional materials which, in turn, affect the content and quality of their lessons. Kemmerer adds that research findings show that low academic qualifications are associated with low performance level and poor self-efficacy while high academic qualifications are associated with high performance level and good self-efficacy.

With regard to professional training, which often involves learning about the job at hand and how well one needs to prepare for it, Heneveld and Craig (1995) observe that the length of professional training does not seem to matter in the long run because it can be compensated by wide classroom teaching experience which Heneveld & Craig believe also compensates for deficiencies in academic qualifications. They believe that a practical approach to training is necessary for achieving high performance levels and for good self-efficacy. Snyder (1990) also reports that there is evidence that a theoretical
approach to training is associated with low performance level and poor self-efficacy (among teachers).

In the Malawi primary school situation, however, training teachers on the job may not necessarily produce good results because of the following reasons:

- There are very few qualified teachers in most schools to adequately act as mentors to all the untrained teachers. Many well-qualified teachers were sent to teach in newly created secondary schools which take up more than 20 percent of the grade 8 students. These schools which are known as Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) were distance education centres before 1998. Just about ten percent of Standard 8 students get allocated a place in a full government or government-supported secondary school. Before 1998, the rest of the Standard 8 students who passed their PSLC examinations but did not get a place in a government secondary school and did not want to repeat Standard 8 were offered secondary education through a distance education program available in centres often located within their communities. Students gathered at these centres to read materials that had been prepared for them for different subjects. These centres were supervised by a teacher-in-charge with the help of one or two other teachers. The teachers, including the teacher-in-charge, were often primary teachers although they often taught the students instead of supervising them. This situation was unsatisfactory to many teachers and the political party now in government made this (and Free Primary Education) into a political issue,
promising that if they were elected into office they would build 250 new secondary schools to accommodate more Standard 8 graduates.

By 1998, very few new secondary schools had been built and the government was facing the possibility of losing the elections the following year. Converting the distance education centres (DECs) into secondary schools seemed a good solution to the problem except that there were no qualified secondary school teachers to teach in these newly created secondary school. MOEST, therefore, decided to promote almost all well-qualified primary school teachers to become secondary schools teachers overnight. And as Dean (2002) notes, that structures that are set up for transitional purposes, especially in education, are difficult to dismantle and often become permanent structures. Primary school teachers with only two years of post-secondary education are becoming an accepted and permanent feature of the secondary school education system, just as untrained teachers have become a permanent feature of the primary school system. CIDA, however, is sponsoring a Special Secondary Teacher Education Program (SSTEP) to help provide some of the primary school teachers more subject matter content and teaching methods appropriate for secondary school students.

- Most untrained teachers have poorer academic qualifications (Kunje, 2002) which is probably why many of them did not qualify for teacher training in the first place.
• For the few untrained teachers who might have good academic qualifications, they probably got into teaching as a matter of necessity rather than out of genuine interest in teaching as a profession.

• The age and sex of a teacher is also considered to be an important factor in students' school performance. A recent study on the distribution of teachers in Malawian schools shows that schools are mostly staffed by young inexperienced teachers who have no or little training in teaching methods (Kadzamira, 2003). The older and more experienced teachers have left the school system for other jobs within MOEST or elsewhere, probably in search of better pay and working conditions than what exists in the schools. There is also a higher representation of women among teachers in Malawian schools, and since most of them are young women, the explanation could be that women are more likely to find teaching compatible with child-care responsibilities than any other job as suggested by Newman (1997) and Snyder (1990). When Kadzamira (2003) presented her research results to a group of academics and MOEST officials, the consensus was that Kadzamira empirically demonstrated three of the major reasons many schools were underperforming (not sending many students to secondary school) these days: because the teachers are young, underqualified, and inexperienced.

2.7.7 Student Outcome

Sociologists see schools as socializing institutions responsible for transmitting the socio-cultural values of a society. The Malawi society is not a homogeneous society. Christian missionaries tried to achieve homogeneity by forcing everyone who enrolled in their
schools to convert to their brand of Christianity. After independence, the new
government declared that Christian values should not be mandatory in schools and that
missionaries should stop refusing to enroll students in their schools who do not belong to
their churches or had no intention to convert to their brand of Christianity. This reduced
the role of the school as a socializing institution for the propagation of Christian values
and made academic outcomes that lead to economic success as the main reason for
schooling.

2.8 Introduction to the Educational Research Environment in Malawi

For 30 years (1964-1994), conducting research in the social sciences in Malawi,
especially in education, had been fraught with innumerable problems for researchers.
These problems ranged from the lack of financial support to loss of jobs and threats on
their lives. This was a result of a cabinet crisis that took place just a month after Malawi
gained her independence from Britain in 1964. This crisis threw the country into an
absolute dictatorship. Most of the best-known and best-loved politicians were either
dismissed from the ruling party or thrown in jail without trial, something that was
unimaginable given that these were the very people known to have fearlessly fought for
our independence from the dreaded British colonialists. The severity of action suffered
by the most prominent members of our new nation quickly sent everybody panicking as
we were soon gripped by feelings of insecurity brought by new laws that created a culture
of fear and malicious intimidation of the whole nation.
We soon understood the full extent of the cabinet crisis and the danger we were all in when warnings were issued by the Prime Minister (who became the Life President of Malawi in 1966) that he would deal ruthlessly with anybody who tried to disturb the peace that Malawians were enjoying after he had fought for self-rule from the British (Lwanda, 1993, p. 64). We began to understand that this meant that we had to watch what we said and did lest we be suspected of siding with those politicians who were now labeled "dissidents". Government informers interpreted any expression of sympathy for the "dissidents" as subversive behaviour against the Prime Minister and his government. One never knew who the government informers were and what really constituted subversive behaviour. The punishment for subversive behaviour ranged from beatings suffered at the hands of party loyalists to detention without trial for as long as it pleased the president and his government informers.

Educational institutions were particularly targeted since schools and colleges were seen as the easiest places for the dissenting politicians to advance their alternative points of view. Special teachers were deployed in all schools to teach political education based on four principals the president claimed were the cornerstones on which the Malawi nation was founded. These were: *loyalty, unity, obedience, and discipline*. We were also told that all other political parties had been abolished and that discussing their ideas constituted subversive behaviour. The country was now a one-party state and the political education in schools was designed to help us not to offend the government. This situation lasted for 30 years (1964-1994) and its effect on education has been described as an affront on academic freedom (Lwanda, 1993).
The effects of this affront on academic freedom was the subject of a national conference on academic freedom in 1994. The conference discussed how the laws that came into being as a way of making sure that there was no subversion in the country affected the development of education, especially educational research. These laws were known as the Preservation of Public Security (PPS) laws and they gave rise to preventive detention regulations (Lwanda, 1993, p. 102). Lwanda explains that the PPS laws effectively silenced academics as more people came to the conclusion that the best way to avoid preventive detention was to become "zombies whose tongues had been cut off" (Lwanda, 1993:103), or simply leave the country as Lwanda himself had done.

One of the academics who had been imprisoned under these laws and later exiled himself to the United Kingdom, Dr Jack Mapanje, explained to the delegates that the effect of the Preservation of Public Security laws was the development of a culture of fear, suspicion, lies, and intolerance which resulted in total loss of academic freedom. He added that the monopoly in publishing by people who were part of the governing elite discouraged academics from publishing their creative work or the findings of their research. Dr Mapanje also noted that the Censorship Board became more stringent in defining what constituted subversive materials, while the creation of the Chiche_a Board was another way in which the government systematically marginalized academics during the one-party rule. It was probably worse to be censored by the Chiche_a Board because one's work was more likely to be closely scrutinized than if it was in English.

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6 Chiche_a is Malawi's National language with English as the official/business language.
It is safe to say that these laws affected some people more than others. For me, living with so many restrictions was something I found very difficult to do, given my natural inclination to question things. I can only attribute my narrow escape from becoming one of the PPS laws statistic to my age at that time, and the fact that I got married and started a family soon after college. Being a full-time teacher, mother, and wife left me with very little time to think about the injustices being inflicted upon my society by a few powerful individuals. An even better incentive to behave myself was the fact that my father had been detained (again) under these laws by the new government. He had been detained before by the colonial government during the struggle for independence in 1959. I, therefore, knew that the government threats were real.

2.9 Effects of Autocratic Rule on Educational Research

Kanyongolo (1994) says that the Preservation of Public Security laws were made all-embracing by several acts which severely limited what people could do or say, especially with regard to research activities. Acts such as the Official Secrets Act and the Official Statistics Act could be used by government officials to declare any information as official government secret, thus, making it unavailable to anyone including academic researchers. There was also the Protected Places and Areas Act which could include schools, colleges and universities any time someone asked for permission to conduct research in these institutions, or to conduct research in an area which the government did not want anybody to write about like urban slums or extremely poor rural communities in dire need of government assistance.
With regard to publishing, Kanyongolo (1994) says that during this period the penal code
contained a section that made it offensive to publish “anything with a seditious
intention”, or “any words with intent to wound the religious feelings of others”.
Kanyongolo notes that this was a real threat to the freedom of academics to report and
publish freely research findings since the range of words which might be interpreted as
“seditious” or “having the intent to wound the religious feelings of others” is wide. As if
these were not enough, Kanyongolo reports that there was also a *Control of
Entertainment Act* which prohibited the publication of any materials which could be seen
as undesirable or against public interest, and the *Education Act* which virtually prohibited
anyone from reporting on or publishing in schools. To make sure nothing escaped these
strict controls, Kanyongolo says that the Malawi courts were allowed to use decisions of
superior English courts as binding or persuasive authority in the Malawian court system.
And since not everything that is contained in the English law serves the interest of
Malawians, I suspect judges chose to use the decisions of superior English courts when it
was necessary to ensure that the wishes of the government were carried out even if this
did not necessarily mean that justice was done.

All these laws and acts notwithstanding, the problem of financing educational research
was real and still remains a major problem today. This has been in spite of the fact the
Malawi government has always regarded education as “centrepiece” in its efforts to
develop the country economically and socially. In practice, the government’s research
priorities are in agriculture and other research areas with the potential for more
immediate financial gains. Nelson, et al. (1975) report that at the time of their research in
1974, they found many government research reports in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, veterinary services, geology, and hydrology but found almost nothing in the social sciences. There was also a large private research report collection on tea conducted by the Tea Research Foundation of Central Africa. The few social science research reports they found were from research which had been supported by the Society of Malawi, an almost entirely expatriate society. The society published its research reports in its own journal called the Society of Malawi Journal.

Nelson, et al. (1975) say that those Malawians who managed to do some research in the social sciences almost always published their articles in foreign publications outside the country. Donors could justify doing research and managing their own development projects by claiming that there was no local expertise in the country. They deliberately ignored the fact that Malawian academics could not do research and publish research reports locally or internationally for fear of negative repercussions from government. And as Mkandawire (1994) says, when Malawians participated in research projects, they were really treated like research assistants rather than researchers in their own right. The persistence of this attitude still lingers on, almost 30 years after Nelson, et al. (1975) reported it. For example, while donors including the Department for International Development (DFID) could not make money available to MIE for a comprehensive evaluation of the Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Program (MIITEP) in order for MIE to obtain feedback information on effectiveness of the program in training teachers on the job, DFID has been making funds available to the University of Sussex (England), the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT, University of
Malawi) and other English researchers to conduct research studies based on MIITEP for whose purpose seems to be getting material for publication as opposed to collecting feedback information for improving the program [see *International Journal of Educational Development (IJED)*, 22(3-4), 2002, Special Issue, and other MUSTER studies].

Before 1994, foreigners were fairly free to do as they pleased because the worst that could happen to them under the Preservation of Public Security laws was to be deported back to their home countries. Mkandawire (1994) observes that foreigners took advantage of this situation by funding research lines that no local authority would dare support. And because they had the money, donors could also decide which work they were not going to do by simply saying that it was not fundable. Mkandawire believes that this may have strengthened the dependency of poor nations on foreign powers to define for them what constituted human rights or development, and other issues.

From my work at the (MIE) which involves working closely with Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) officials as well as international donors to education, I understand very well what Mkandawire (1994) is saying. Even with a democratic government, this trend seems to be almost impossible to reverse. The pre-democracy repressive regime was advantageous to the international community because donors:

- did not have to base their projects on local research findings;
- did not have to involve local Malawian academics and researchers in formulating their research questions or when deciding on methodologies;
• did not have to share their research findings with local academics or publish their research findings in journals and publications which were accessible to Malawians; and
• could conduct their research or implement their projects and get out of Malawi without being answerable to anybody.

In democratic Malawi (1994-present), most of the financing for education is still through donor funding (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). This takes away much of the influence that local Malawian researchers could have on decisions that affect the provision of educational services and the kind of research activities that we should be doing. Local research findings, where available, can easily be ignored unless they threaten the very existence of the government or donor presence as was the case on September 21, 2002, when the Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology “reacted” to the MUSTER research findings which claimed that untrained teachers were contributing substantially to the declining quality of education in Malawi. MOEST announced that it had suspended the recruitment of temporary teachers for primary schools. The public outcry against the flooding of schools with untrained teachers (close to 20,000 in 1994) was loud and clear right from the beginning but the government never paid much attention, mostly because the hiring of untrained teachers was supported by donor funds, and it also provided an employment opportunity to many Form 4 (Grade 12) graduates who, prior to their teaching appointment, were greatly increasing the unemployment figures. By 2002, however, most of the donors that supported the hiring of the untrained teachers had pulled out and the government could not sustain paying too many teachers.
2.10 Motivation for This Study

Although Malawi has been a multi-party democracy for nine years, there are still very few independent\footnote{In this context, independent studies would be those studies that do not receive funding from the government or donor agencies that mostly support the government such as CIDA, UNICEF, USAID, and WB.} studies done, especially in the field of education where there is a heavy presence of donors. As a sponsored student, I automatically thought that my research project would be funded by my sponsors since there is something in their project guide to that effect. I, therefore, spent a lot of time formulating a research question which I thought would be more readily approved by my sponsors, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) who, through the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS), sponsored me to come and study at the University of British Columbia (UBC) as a Commonwealth Scholar.

CIDA is sponsoring a teacher education program in Malawi for primary school teachers who have been posted to teach in secondary schools. I thought it would be of interest to the CIDA project to know how this transfer of qualified teachers was affecting teaching and learning in primary schools. After all, the hiring of so many untrained teachers was based on the understanding that the untrained teachers would get most of their training on the job from the qualified teachers in the schools as they went about their day-to-day duties. The posting of these qualified and experienced teachers to secondary schools now meant that primary schools were teeming with unqualified teachers who were not getting the support they needed in the schools to perform reasonably well in their duties.
After communicating with my sponsors about my intention to go back to Malawi for my field research, they told me that they only provide research funding to Canadian nationals or landed immigrants. They were, however, confident that the CIDA office in Malawi would be able to help me since my research project fell within their project interests. They, therefore, helped me with the resources to get back to Malawi for data collection with the understanding that I would get the extra funds I needed to go to schools and collect data from the CIDA managers in Malawi.

I left Canada for Malawi on August 21, 2001, for field research. When I met with the CIDA managers in early September, they did not think my proposed research fitted in with the objectives of the secondary school teacher education project. They told me that they would need to consult with their bosses in Canada who would have to confirm if some funds should be allocated to me from the teacher education project. Then came September 11, 2001, and there was literally no communication between the Malawi office and the Ottawa office. I waited for more than two weeks before I was told that the Ottawa office had refused to allocate money for my data collection. In the end, my employers made some funds available for me to collect whatever data I could during the few weeks I had remaining for data collection.

The failure of my program sponsors to fully support my data collection exercise gave me the freedom to include my institution's concerns in this study. In the absence of funding to carry out a comprehensive evaluation exercise of its programs, the MIE was equally concerned about its performance as assessed by its clients – teachers and students and
their parents. This was also of personal concern to me since some of my specific duties at MIE involved evaluation of its programs. The absence of regular evaluations of our activities, therefore, often made me wonder how well my work was helping to make the education of the Malawian child better and more productive. I wanted to find out what our clients (teachers, students, and parents) thought about what we were offering them through schools. This information was not just going to be good in helping me complete my doctoral studies; it was also going to be important feedback in recasting the role of MIE in the 21st century.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: THE CASE STUDY

Although the political situation in Malawi today (and at the time of the data collection in 2001 and 2003) is much better than it was during the one-party rule (1964-1994), there are still problems that limit researchers’ access to their populations of interest for data collection. For example, while the government keeps assuring us of the freedom of speech, no one really knows if Malawians are completely free or willing to comment on government policies that do not seem to be working for the ordinary people. The new government has had its own share of dismissing ministers and other high-ranking officials who were removed from their positions because they were rumoured to have disagreed with the president or some government policy. And while probably no “ordinary” Malawian has experienced that kind of wrath from the new government, the fact that it has happened several times at cabinet and other high levels of government is enough to remind us that all governments seem to work the same way and it wouldn’t be too long before lower level employees like teachers became affected. This was a real problem for me having chosen the case study methodology and the use of a mixed-method research design that incorporated a survey, interviews, focus group discussions, and study of documents.

I chose a mixed-method research design to ensure that I had as much usable data as I could get when writing my report in Canada since I knew I would not be able to go back into the research field once I started writing up the report. Darlington and Scott (2002) recommend mixing methods because this helps a researcher to build a composite picture of the problem which in my case, I felt was necessary since I could not find studies that specifically linked children’s
schooling to their everyday existence and their aspirations for the future. Almost all studies assumed that everybody values education the same way because “everybody knows and everybody knows that everyone else knows that education rules in modern society” (Meyer, 1977, quoted by Kingston, Hubbard, Lapp, Schroeder, & Wilson, 2003, p. 55)

Dixon, Bouma, and Atkinson (1987, p. 107) recommend case studies when one needs to understand what is going on. I needed to understand what was going on at several levels:

- The family level.
- The school level.
- The national educational level.
- The country level in general, especially the political and economic aspects.
- The global level from where ideas like Education for All come.

Babbie (1990, pp. 32-33) adds that case studies are ideal for understanding a complex array of issues because they allow for a comprehensive description and explanation of the many components of a given situation, making it possible to determine the logical interrelations of the various components. And because the main aim of a case study is to understand the phenomenon as comprehensively as possible, the number of variables under consideration are not limited. This helps the researcher to gain insights that have more generalized applicability beyond the single case that was studied although the case study itself cannot ensure generalizability.

Apart from understanding what was going on at the time of the data collection, I needed to understand what had gone on before that led us – the Malawi nation and its education
system – to be where it is today. The case study design allowed me to do this without having to compare the Malawi school system with another although it was good to know what was happening elsewhere. Dixon, Bouma, and Atkinson, (1987) say that the ability to study a phenomenon without having to compare it with another is one of the greatest advantages of case studies because most case studies are exploratory. I consider my study exploratory because I did not set out to test any particular hypothesis. This allowed me the privilege to investigate as many variables as possible. The result is that I was able to identify several strands that could lead to other fully-fledged studies which I think should be done soon by anybody interested in seeing that children in developing countries receive a meaningful education.

3.1 Data Collection

I collected data through survey, interviews, focus group discussions, and study of documents.

3.1.1 The Survey

Survey data came from the visits I made to some schools in Malawi from October to December, 2001. Because of time and financial constrains, I visited primary schools only mainly because in 2001, as had been the case since 1994, there were many news items in the local papers concerning the perceived deterioration of the performance of primary schools following the introduction of FPE. My work at MIE also involves mostly primary school and primary teacher education programs because primary schools have experienced more curricular and/or program changes and innovations than other levels of the educational system. These curricular innovations have mostly aimed at increasing literacy levels in response to the 1990 Jomtien call
for Education for All (EFA). A more thorough study would need to collect data from as many levels of the Malawi education system as possible.

I used a semi-closed questionnaire (see Appendix 1) which I administered to teachers and school administrators. Although I had planned that this was going to be a self-administered questionnaire, the questionnaire ended up being used as an interview or focus group discussion guide because many teachers were not willing to commit their views to paper themselves. The reason for this was not so much fear as would have been the case before 1994. This time, teachers did not feel obliged to help because they were in the middle of a bitter dispute with their employer (MOEST) over salaries and other benefits. I acknowledged this situation right from the start when I arrived at the schools because I wanted the teachers to understand that I was respectful of their right to decide what was best for them in their situation. It just happened that they were exercising this right at the most inconvenient time for me with regard to my study program.

The questionnaire asked for data concerning teachers' work-life, including their personal and professional characteristics, their feelings about their work and how they thought their work context and their own characteristics affected the way they did their work. I also noted the general school and classroom conditions of the schools I visited, and in some cases, I asked school administrators questions based on some of the things I had observed in their schools. For example, in one school, 90 percent (8 out of the 9 teachers in the school) of the teachers were untrained and still waiting to receive professional training. One had been teaching for seven years without any formal training. I could not
go away without wondering how one qualified teacher with his own overwhelming teaching and administrative responsibilities was able to assist eight others to do their work satisfactorily. He admitted that he did not ordinarily attempt to help anyone unless it was some kind of emergency. In fact, the untrained teachers rarely asked for help, he added.

3.1.1.1 Teachers’ job action and its effect on my data collection exercise

The complete school cycle in Malawi is twelve years which is divided into two main levels. The first eight years form the primary school (elementary) level while the last four years form the secondary (high) school level. The school year begins in January and it is divided into three terms. The third term begins in August/September and ends in October/November. I had planned to visit schools in September and October before the end-of-year examinations but due to several problems including money and transport, I did not get to the schools until the first week of October. It was important for me to visit the schools personally because I did not have enough time to mail questionnaire to schools and wait for them to be returned to me. Mailing questionnaire to schools would have been a lot cheaper but, apart from the fact that I would never get them back on time if I got them back at all, I would not have had the opportunity to see some of the extremely poor conditions that exist in some of the schools I visited as shown in Chapter 2.

Just when I was ready to go to the schools, there was an announcement from the Teachers’ Union of Malawi (TUM) that teachers would be going on an indefinite strike
until their grievances were addressed. It was reported that there were two main issues that had precipitated the planned strike action:

- The president had publicly promised teachers a salary increase several months before and it had still not been implemented.
- The government announced that it would be paying its workers differential housing allowances based not on academic and/or professional qualifications as had been the case, but based on where one worked – rural, semi-rural and urban centres. Those working in urban areas were to get the highest housing allowance because it was argued that housing was very expensive in urban areas. Those in rural areas would get the least because it was believed that housing was cheap in rural areas.

The government’s reaction to the teachers’ strike threat was that it was illegal because the teachers had not exhausted all possible channels of negotiations. The issues raised did not just affect teachers, and government had not completed exploring ways of addressing these grievances to the satisfaction of all its employees (Comment section of *The Nation, 29 August, 2001*). With this reaction from the government, TUM announced that the decision for teachers to go on strike was no longer sanctioned by TUM. Teachers were, however, free to collectively or individually make their own decisions as to whether to go on strike or not. Many schools decided to implement the strike action as a “go slow” job action where they kept the schools open but did very little teaching and other school-related jobs.
I had to make a decision as to whether I was still going to go to the schools or not. From my personal discussions with my colleagues, some MOEST officials, and some school heads and teachers of nearby schools, it became clear that if I went to the schools, I would not be in a position to get the teachers to attend to me if they did not want to. They could even be hostile to me since teachers know that the MIE is an essential part of the structure of MOEST and, therefore, of government and its policies. Finally, a colleague who has worked with many of the school administrators through in-service education programs offered to accompany me to the schools to ensure my safety as well as to facilitate communication in terms of disassociating my study from MOEST activities. We agreed that he would not try to persuade the teachers to give me the information I was looking for if the teachers and school administrators were not willing to do so.

Having made the decision to go to the schools, I had to plan carefully to be able to visit as many schools as I could in the time available and given the amount of money that was made available to me by the MIE. MOEST officials made an all-terrain vehicle available for me to use to go to the schools. This helped to stretch the money that the MIE had given me, making it possible to pay for food, and accommodation for my colleague, the MOEST driver, and for myself for 10 days of field work, as well as buying fuel for the MOEST vehicle. Since MOEST headquarters is close to 200 miles from MIE, I had to make other transport arrangements to visit some of the schools that are closer to MIE and to meet people for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In the end, I managed to visit nine schools in all the three regions of Malawi – Northern, Central, and
Southern Malawi (see the map of Malawi), and conducted six focus group discussions and six in-depth interviews with people other than teachers.
Figure 3-1: Map of Malawi showing the position of the Capital City, Lilongwe, Zomba where MIE is located, and the major towns of the three regions of Malawi

Data Collection Sites

Northern Region: Rumphi, Mzuzu, Mzimba

Central Region: Dowa, Salima, Lilongwe

Southern Region: Machinga, Zomba, Blantyre

Map Source: CIA-World Fact Book Website
In my proposal, I had planned to visit 20 schools and to conduct 25 in-depth interviews but given the kind of problems I have explained above, I was happy that I had been able to visit these many schools and was able to have some private and group discussions with the teachers in the schools I visited. The schools I visited were very different from the ones that I was familiar with, either from my work in the MIE trial schools or from my knowledge of schools in my own community. These visits gave me a better understanding of the various conditions under which teaching and learning was taking place in Malawi, especially in very poor communities. I made note of the features in and around the school that I felt had an impact on the teaching and learning, and I took every chance to discuss with as many teachers as possible their work and how they saw it in terms of its importance in the everyday lives of their students.

3.1.1.2 Identifying schools for data collection purposes

Under the conditions of a threatened strike, I wasn’t very sure whether it was safe to go the schools before the teachers and MOEST had resolved their differences. I could have decided to collect this data from the MIE trial schools which were likely to be more accommodating of my presence. However, I did not think that would give me any more different information than what I already knew. It became necessary for me, therefore, to work more closely with MOEST officials in identifying schools that I could visit for data collection.

I explained to MOEST officials that I did not want to collect data from the schools that MIE works with as trial schools because the conditions in these
schools could not be said to be typical of an "average" schools in Malawi. The trial schools had been carefully selected on the basis that they provided fairly good conditions for testing our curricular innovations. Our curricular innovations were always planned with optimal conditions in mind rather than taking into account the bad school conditions that are, in fact, more prevalent in many Malawian schools. I, therefore, asked them to identify for me a number of really bad rural schools, especially those that they themselves do not visit regularly, and what they considered to be good schools, whether they were rural or urban schools. I chose the nine schools myself based on their accessibility.

Four of the nine schools are urban school (one from the Northern Region, two from the Central Region and one from the Southern Region). Of the five rural schools, two are in the North, two in the Centre and one in the South. I had thought that I would be able to visit more schools in the South but the strike action was more prevalent in the South than in the other regions. It was also much more difficult to go to rural schools because of the bad road conditions even when schools were not very far in terms of mileage.

While my primary target was government schools, I included some schools that still have some religious affiliations because these schools often get extra resources from their religious sponsors over and above what they get from the government. I wanted to see if this makes a big difference to the teaching and learning environment. Three schools in the sample, therefore, had some religious
affiliations (two in the North and one in the South). The other six were public schools run by the government through regional and district education offices.

I did not include schools which do not get any support from the government (privately funded) because they are not really meant for the “ordinary” Malawian child. It would have been informative, however, if private schools were included in this sample since increasing numbers of children are now receiving their education through private schools. The increase in the number of private schools is said to be a reflection of people’s frustrations with the public education system. It has also been claimed in the local papers that parents are losing faith in the public school system and see the private schools as the only way to get their children to pass the national examinations and go to the next level of the educational system.

Malawi also has single sex schools which I did not visit for data collection mainly because of time constraints. I think these schools would have contributed important information to the study since girls only schools tend to be better equipped and staffed than boys only or coed schools because of the Girls’ Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) project which was sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the 1990s. The aim of the GABLE project was to encouraged the government to increase allocation of resources to schools in support for girls’ education.
3.1.1.3 Access to schools and teachers

After I had made my choice of schools, the teachers and school administrators were supposed to be informed of my planned visit by the local education officials in their area. In many cases, however, the schools had no idea I would be visiting since the only way they would have known in time was if someone went to tell them about my planned visit. Many rural schools get mailed letters only once or twice a month. The district/regional education officers were also responsible for letting me know if the dates I had proposed to visit the schools were not suitable. I hoped that having the district and/or regional education officers involved in this way would help to assure participants that this was an exercise that MOEST officials were aware of. And in a sense, I hoped that this would ensure my safety in case the teachers wanted to vent their anger against MOEST and other government officials on me. I left for the schools before I knew whether the school administration and the teachers had been informed of my planned visits. This worried me a bit but I could not wait any longer because of time constraints.

When I was in a school, I could not discern any real resentment against me and my study even in the schools that had not been informed of my visit, or where they were implementing some form of labour action. After explaining the purpose of my visit, I made it clear that they were free to tell me to go away if they did not want to participate in my study. Understandably, there was a mixed reaction to my visit. In all cases, the school head or whoever was representing him at the time asked to consult his or her staff to find out their reaction to my request to stay in their school for a day and collect the data I needed. In all schools, they decided that I could stay because they thought I could help them convey their grievances to MOEST officials. Participation, however, remained optional and quite a few teachers decided not to take part in
any way in this study. In all, 164 teachers completed or participated in discussions based on the questionnaire I had brought with me (see Appendix 1). In a few cases, the school administration decided they would work on their own as group work assignment and did not allow me to be present during their discussions. Little wonder that in such cases, all the responses were the same. Apart from completing the questionnaires, some teachers and school administrators agreed to private interviews. Generally, however, teachers felt more comfortable to discuss with me issues concerning their work as a group. I accepted this since I had already planned for the possibility of focus group discussions.

The 164 teachers represent a very small sample in relation to the more than 55 thousand teachers in the primary school system. However, as Fowler (1993) says, the quality of the survey should really be judged by its purpose (p. 6) and in my case, statistical analyses, which typically require large numbers, was not one of them. This, of course, raises problems of generalizability as Darlington and Scott (2002) observe. The number of teachers participating in this study was further reduced by the fact that, apart from my giving them the freedom to choose not to participate, in some schools, some teachers were attending strike meetings or had gone to meet the education officers from MOEST who were supposed to bring their pay to some agreed collection points. Teachers are supposed to be paid by the beginning of the fourth week of the month. This was the first or second week of October and their pay had not been delivered to the collection points. The teachers had been going to these collection points for a number of school days and waiting for the people who were supposed to pay them. This was an added reason for teachers in some schools to resolve to implement some type of strike action. They regarded their action as necessary to ensure that they get their pay from their employer on time.
3.1.1.4 Other data collection instruments

Besides the semi-closed questionnaire, I also had a note book, a camera, and a voice recorder for recording observations and any incidental data that seemed useful in answering the basic research questions. I never used the voice recorder because none of the participants wanted their voices on tape although they were quite happy for me to take their pictures and pictures of whatever I found interesting in the schools (see pictures below).

Figure 3-2: I took this picture of a grass-fenced school vegetable garden near the school’s water pump because there was nothing growing in it. The head-teacher explained that the water pump also serves the community who often stole the garden produce even before it is ready to eat.
Figure 3-3: I took this picture because I was struck by the size of the two girls in the back. These are Standard 1 and 2 children which means that these girls are also in Standard 1 or 2. This is usually what happens when mothers keep their daughters home to help them with household chores and only allow the girls to go to school when another child gets old enough to help. Such girls often claim that they are in school just to learn to read and write and not to do the whole school cycle.

3.1.1.5 Supplementary data

A week after my school visits, I learned that we (the Malawi Institute of Education) were hosting a leadership/supervisory course for teachers from 39 schools from all over the country. I asked these teachers to complete my questionnaire, explaining that it had nothing to do with their course but it was something they would find interesting because it involved something they did everyday. Sixty-nine completed questionnaires were returned raising the number of teachers and school administrators who participated in this study to 233.
3.1.2 Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

I collected interview and focus group discussion data between February and April, 2003. Most of the participants came from the community to which the MIE belongs because it was too difficult for me to go to the research site I had identified earlier in my proposal due to heavy rains that had eroded many access roads and washed away some bridges in that area. There was no chance that the roads and bridges would be repaired before the rains stopped in April/May. Even if they were, I could not wait this long since I was due back at UBC in May, 2003.

The MIE community proved to be a much better alternative because, although the MIE has existed in that community for more than 20 years developing and implementing various educational innovations, the local people have not really been involved in any of its activities. And yet, educational concerns are always a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 1994) and MIE does not always take advantage of the contexts it readily has available to test the suitability and acceptability of the programs it develops by the general public from where the students come.

3.1.2.1 Locating interview and focus group discussion participants

The history of education in Malawi runs parallel to the political history. Our political history as the Malawi nation starts with the declaration of Nyasaland (the present Malawi) as a British Protectorate in 1891. Before then, the people who now have the national identity known as “Malawi” were separate autonomous or semi-autonomous tribal and/or ethnic groups that had their own forms of governments under different paramount chiefs. They were located across a much wider geographic region that spreads as far away as the present day Zambia, Tanzania, and
Mozambique, and were mostly recognized by their distinct languages (Pachai, 1973). The present Malawi, therefore, like many other African nations, is very much a creation of foreign powers during the scramble for Africa in the 1880s which was a result of Europeans’ quest for spatial expansion, both in terms of physical space as well as cultural space (Young, 1995, p. 172).

Christian missionaries, like their counterparts, the colonialists, divided the country among themselves according to the “brands” of Christianity they were propagating. The Domasi area where MIE is located was under Scottish Presbyterian missionaries who also had mission stations in many parts of the country. And since one of the main reasons for the spread of Christianity to lands where the people were considered backward and barbaric was to civilize and acculturate them to a more civilized way of life (Gann & Duignan, 1962; Gould, 1993; Mair, 1936; Pachai, 1977; Young, 1995), the people of Domasi who have a known ethnic identity with its own distinct language different from Chiche_a, the national language, have a lot in common with the rest of Malawians through their conversion to Christianity. This gave me the confidence that the views of the people of Domasi would be representative of the general educational aspirations of Malawians because the Christian experience makes them share the same values with most Malawians with regard to schooling. I just needed to pay more attention to what Darlington and Scott (2002) say, that the same thing can be described differently in different places while the same terminology can mean different things in different places or to different people (p. 19) since I did not know how this is mediated by actual personal (educational and cultural) experiences.
In Malawi where education is not compulsory, I think our educational experiences are different for each one of us, not so much because of our personal, psychological, and cognitive developmental differences, or differences in the learning environments, but because they are mediated by the purposes of education we hold for ourselves. These may be what make us want to go to school in the first place, in the absence of a law to that effect. The private purposes of our education may, therefore, also be partly mediated by a system of cultural values from our ethnic backgrounds that may not have been erased by the forced integration of our cultures into the Christian (and in some cases, the Moslem) ways of being. This means that while the official educational system expects all learners to have the same educational experiences (and values) as defined by the government, and as implemented in the schools through a common school curriculum, the individual purposes of education are different because they depend on the perceptions (and expectations) of the role of education people have with regard to their own life expectations.

In the end, I chose to leave out most of the personal and cultural variables hoping that there will be time to explore these when I finally complete this program. I chose, instead, to use the colonial/Christian variable which I knew was a common experience of almost every one in Malawi. I, therefore, came up with four distinct periods that were likely to have influenced educational experiences of the people of Malawi from the 1880s to the present to guide me in collecting the interview and focus group discussion data:

**Cohort 1:** Before 1953, when Malawi was ruled directly from Britain under rules which did not condone discrimination in the same way it was in
Zimbabwe and South Africa. In 1953, Britain “annexed” Malawi to Zimbabwe and Zambia and formed the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This meant that the apartheid rules that were operational in Zimbabwe and South Africa were also applicable to Malawi. This became the major reason for Malawians to fight for independence from British rule.

**Cohort 2:** 1953-1964, the period that marks a bitter political struggle against British rule as was represented by the federal government in Harare. This struggle led to Malawi’s independence in 1964.

**Cohort 3:** 1964-1990, a period of relative stability because of the one-party government. Every government decision was law. Individual opinions, especially those that were critical of the way the government managed government institutions, were not tolerated.

**Cohort 4:** 1990-Present, a period marked by greater resistance to the one-party rule and Malawians becoming more courageous in expressing their dissenting views on how the government manages its institutions, especially the education sector. It has also been the period when international voices on Education For All (EFA) have been heard the loudest forcing the Malawi government to remove the requirement for parents to pay school fees for primary school students thus making primary education “free”. Debate on whether primary education in Malawi can be considered free comes up.

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8Not every community embraced Christianity, especially in areas where Islam was well-established. Islam came to Malawi before British colonialism and where it was strong, the people successfully resisted Christian influences until independence in 1964.

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from time-to-time in the local papers like the one that was published in the *Chronicle* of 14th October, 2003 by Pilirani Phiri in which he claims that FPE is not free.

I used these political periods as the main criteria for recruiting participants for interviews and focus group discussions. I wanted to see if these periods had an effect on the way people interpreted their own educational experiences as well as the experiences of others – like parents interpreting their children's educational experiences.

### 3.1.2.2 Participant characteristics

For each cohort, I considered participant characteristics such as age, level of education, sex/gender, occupation, and language as important but not particularly necessary because of the fact that in most Malawian rural communities, it is very difficult to make precise distinctions of these characteristics (maybe with the exception of male/female characteristics because gender roles can be equally confusing). This is because concepts like age, occupation, and education tend to be understood differently from the way they would be understood by a Westerner. For example, age of consent is not necessarily a chronological age like 19 years for Canada. Age of consent could be marked by such issues as initiation or marriage which often take place before the person (especially for women) is 19. As for occupation, it is common for Malawians to assume that it refers to paid employment because our colonial masters and Christian missionaries did not recognize our traditional activities as constituting genuine “work” that could be equal to professional or paid work in the Western traditions. However, I still felt that these
characteristics were important in validating the information I was to collect and so my guidelines with regard to these personal characteristics were:

*Age.* Any adult was eligible to participate if s/he chose to. I did not refuse to interview people or exclude them from focus group discussions if they did not look 19 years and they could not tell me when they were born. (In Malawi births do not have to be registered).

*Level of education.* Participants did not have to have any formal education to participate in my study. This was because Serpell’s 1993 study shows that even those who have not attended formal schooling themselves do have specific ideas as to why they would encourage someone to attend school. I, however, deliberately sought some people who had some unique educational experiences such as having been teachers and retired or resigned to work in some educational-related projects to be my key-informants. Key-informants did not necessarily come from the Domasi/MIE community although three participants were part of the MIE establishment.

*Sex of participants.* I tried to get a sample that was half male and half female as I know that men and women have different life experiences which influence their ability to take advantage of educational services available to them. I could not, however, get too many women and girls to participate since many declined to be interviewed or participate in focus group discussions because they claimed to be very busy.
**Occupation.** During the 2003 data collection exercise, I did not think it was necessary to interview more teachers who were still teaching because of time constraints, and also because the issues they had been complaining about in 2001 had not really been resolved. I, therefore, felt that the 2001 data were still valid. I did not exclude a teacher if s/he was a member of the community where I was conducting interviews and focus group discussions. Participants’ occupation was, therefore, not particularly of interest during the 2003 data collection phase.

**Language.** I used both English and Chichewa for the interviews and focus group discussions depending on the level of education of the people involved, or if there was an expressed preference for one language or the other. Chichewa has been Malawi’s national language since 1964 which makes it easy to communicate in cases where the researcher and the participants have different languages. For example, the community I work and live in speaks a language I am not fluent in but every one has a good working knowledge of Chichewa and/or English. It was, therefore, easy for me to collect data using Chichewa or English as applicable.

3.1.2.3 Accessing interview and focus group discussion participants

I sent a letter to the senior chief of Domasi (the area in which MIE is located), requesting permission to go into his villages to discuss with his subjects the role of education in their everyday lives. He gave me permission to go and meet the local chiefs in the various villages in his area. I was able to see four group village heads who all agreed to identify people in their villages who fitted the four political periods as above. I left each village
after my first visit having set a date for me to come back and meet with the people who
the chiefs would have identified to participate in the study. When I went back to the
villages as arranged, I would find a group of people waiting for me at the group village
headman’s house. The chiefs explained to me that nobody agreed to a private interview.
They all wanted to be together when I asked the questions. I took this as a sign that
Malawians were still not taking the risk to be misunderstood and be reported as having
said something that could be interpreted as criticizing the government; that the culture of
silence was still alive and well, and that I was being viewed with a certain amount of
suspicion.

3.1.2.4 Size of focus groups

The people who came to their group village headman’s headquarters probably came to
find out for themselves what their village head was talking about and, maybe, to “benefit”
from whatever “gifts/rewards” were available to those who decided to participate in my
study. I say this because there was always a small crowd (often more than ten people
present) waiting for me with the chief whenever I went back for the interviews. The
famine I have referred to before made this a time when nobody would pass an
opportunity for extra food or money handouts. The famine and the people’s desperate
state were being taken advantage of by many people, especially politicians who were
looking for support for their parties. These people called for meetings and distributed
food or money at the end of the meeting. Everyone who received such gifts would be
reminded to remain loyal to the party that the donor belonged.
In my case, I could have been confused with the politicians when I kept on emphasizing that my study was not actually a part of my usual work at the MIE. I suspect this might have been the case because one of the group village heads I had met with and arranged for a date to meet people who would be willing to participate in my study never managed to have a group ready for me when I reported on the appointed day. I rescheduled my visit three times and three times, the chief was “busy” entertaining high-ranking party officials. I learned later that his village was adequately supplied with maize flour because this was the original home of the high-ranking party official who was always in the village whenever I came for my scheduled meetings. The party official may have thought I wanted to sway “his” people to another party. This apparently is not an uncommon phenomenon in Africa given that Kiluva-Ndunda (2001) reports about having a similar experience in Kenya from the local Member of Parliament (MP) in her area who used all kinds of threats on her and all the participants to stop her study because he believed she was campaigning to oust him in the next general elections.

Figure 3 – 4: One of the groups of “parents” that formed a focus group
3.1.2.5 Conducting focus group discussions and personal interviews

When I went to schools in 2001 and had focus group discussions with teachers, the discussions were very animated due to the grievances they had against their employer, MOEST. Also, because of the nature of their work, there were very few teachers that I could say looked inhibited during the discussions. With the people in the Domasi/MIE location, very few people actively participated in the discussions regardless of the size of the group. Yin (1994) says that some participants in a focus group tend to feel pressured to remain silent or to agree with some dominant ideas due to the felt potential for embarrassment. This tended to apply to the few women who came along to the meetings. Some of the groups at the village heads’ homes were so large it was like a public meeting. And yet only four or five men actively participated in the discussions. The women said something if I directed a question at them and often their response was simply to agree or disagree with little or no explanation for their answer. In the end, I think one of the most important unintended outcomes of my visiting the villages and having these open group discussions was their helping to build trust between the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) and the communities around it because this was probably the first time someone from the MIE had actually gone into the villages to ask people their opinions about the educational system and by implication, the work of the MIE, in the 22 years of MIE’s existence.

This experience is what led me to decide on a reference group or key informants for individual interviews who could help me understand better what was going on in terms of village dynamics, and would be willing to discuss some of the findings that sounded
puzzling to me. I hoped this would give me another perspective on some of the issues that affect education and schooling in Malawi – one that was informed by logic, perhaps based on hard facts, as opposed to the villagers’ (who I will hereafter refer to as “parents”9 with quotation marks) and teachers’ perspectives that were mostly emotionally charged. I was also able to have two focus group discussions with youth. One was an all male out-of-school youth while the other was an all girl in-school youth. The girls were under 19 years and permission had been given by their parents for them to participate in my study. The boys’ and girls’ groups represented the 1990 to present cohort although most people, whether in focus group discussion or during in-depth interviews, discussed mostly what was happening in schools today as a way of making comparisons with what was happening in schools during their own time.

While I very much wanted to do in-depth interviews with the participants in the Domasi/MIE locale, I did not have the time to build the required trust and rapport to enable me to explore some of the questions raised during the meetings and group discussions. Darlington and Scott (2002) emphasize the importance of trust and rapport when trying to unravel the meaning of experience and the complexity of human behaviour because good interviews often take a long time before participants share their true feelings and thoughts. The authors add that being able to “get in, get on, and get out” of a research setting with minimum misunderstandings and confrontations ensures the development of trust and improves the quality of the researcher’s co-existence with

9 I use parents with quotation marks because some of the teachers and key-informants were also parents. Although most of the villagers were parents, they actually represent Malawians in general and not just parents.
the research participants (p. 22). This, I felt, was a very important consideration to make especially for the MIE and for my future research activities.

I had some very interesting experiences concerning “getting in, getting on, and getting out”. In two cases, my first introductory visit to the village head’s house resulted in an impromptu focus group discussion because I found the village heads already with a group of some of their village elders who insisted that I explain my mission in their presence. This meant that I collected data when I was least prepared. The spontaneity, however, made me feel that this was a study that was long overdue. In one of the cases, the village head was away and his wife suggested she invite some of the village elders to come and hear why I wanted to see their leader. She told us (my colleague who had accompanied me, the driver, and I) that the elders were meeting a short distance from her house. I offered her the use of our vehicle, knowing that “short” distances in rural areas can mean anything from a mile to five miles. The vehicle was a Land Rover, the type that colonial administrators used and the Malawi government continues to use to perform basically the same functions as the colonial government did, especially in rural areas.

We waited for about 15 minutes before we heard the vehicle coming back. It was full of people and when they came out, they all bunched together in one corner and asked why we wanted to see their leader. I was amazed at how anxious and untrusting they all looked, almost 40 years after the colonial government had collapsed. Soon after, the village head arrived from where he had been and the group looked more relaxed. The village head recognized the driver as one of his subjects who no longer lived in the
village. That helped a lot in assuring everyone that we couldn’t be on a mission that could possibly bring trouble to their village.

The failure to conduct in-depth interviews with “parents” was compensated by the fact that group discussions helped people to remember things that they probably would not have remembered on their own. So, while there was consensus in the group discussions, there was also a good amount of depth as individuals added their own personal experiences to the discussions. This made the discussions a learning experience for all present. It can still be argued, however, that perhaps the personal stories would have been richer in private as Darlington and Scott (2002) say that interviews are done as a way of trying to understand the meaning people make of their personal lives from their own perspectives.

3.1.2.6 Recruiting a research assistant

Given other unforeseeable problems during the time I was ready to collect data, I realized that I needed a research assistant to help me type out my interview and focus group reports as it was not always possible to do so myself due to erratic power supply. The heavy rains that had damaged the access roads and washed away bridges also damaged the main hydropower station and electricity was being rationed out to consumers all the time I was in Malawi. There wasn’t even a program to indicate when your area would have no power so we could plan our work. As for the actual data collection, the same colleague who offered to go with me to the schools in 2001 also accompanied me to meet the chiefs whenever he had the time. He has been at MIE for more than 25 years and
knows the area and some of the community leaders fairly well. The MIE also hoped that the data I would be collecting could be of interest to some of the projects that MIE was implementing.

3.1.3 The Study of Documents

While in Canada, I searched the UBC Library and the internet for documents which I thought would help me throw light on the problem I was trying to understand. In Malawi, I relied mostly on documents which the MIE has in the library or individual officers have by virtue of their jobs. In the end, I reviewed the following documents:

- the Education Policy Investment Framework (PIF);
- the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) proposal and workbook;
- Education for All (EFA) documents;
- World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF publications;
- the National Education Goals Reports (American) and the British Columbia (BC), Canada, education website for comparison with Malawi’s education goals;
- literature on Canadian First Nations education, especially that pertaining to residential schools; and
• various primary curricula documents used in schools which are prefaced by Malawi’s national goals for education.

Having been involved in the implementation of the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy and being very familiar with the problems that schools and MOEST were now faced with as a result of this policy, I wanted to know more about the rationale for Education for All (EFA) – its history and why people believe in it. That way, I thought I would understand better why the Malawi education system was having so much trouble with FPE and perhaps, see possibilities of making it work better. The survey, interviews, and focus group discussions were meant to help me understand what it takes for children to be in school in Malawi, and the children’s and their parents’ perspective on the role of education in their everyday lives.

The study of documents emphasized education as being what Africa needs to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Education is seen as the cornerstone of development and the foundation of competitiveness and social well-being (WB, 2001). I discovered that between the Jomtien WCEFA in 1990 and now, many international organizations besides UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and country-specific agencies such as CIDA, DFID, GTZ, and USAID which I was familiar with, had been formed, all with the aim of ensuring that everyone in developing countries has access to education. Some of these newer organizations include:

• New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD),
• Global Campaign for Education (GCE),
• G8 Education task Force,
• Millennium African Recovery Programme (MAP), and the
• Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA).

I did not spend much time on these documents, however, because much of what they say is contained in the original EFA, World Bank, G8, UNESCO, and UNICEF documents. The Malawi documents also have similar ideas to those contained in the international documents.

3.1.3.1 Education Policy Investment Framework (PIF)

The Education Policy Investment Framework (PIF) has been developed as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP), and is a donor-supported initiative which is meant to help link education more precisely to poverty elimination and development strategies (EFA, 2002). Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (PRSP) have been requested by donors from Highly Indebted Poor countries (HIPC) as a precondition for HIPCs to be guaranteed debt reduction and development financing through the World Bank. PRSP requires that all sectors of development in which a country is to invest be included, and education is seen as a key component in poverty elimination and human and economic development (EFA, 2002, p. 46).

The section of the PIF which I found most pertinent to this study was the section on relevance of education which was articulated according to the three levels of education: primary, secondary, and tertiary. In an unpaginated 2003 draft PIF Implementation:
Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation document, relevance at the primary level is expected to be achieved through a national curriculum that addresses a range of appropriate competencies for personal and national development, especially focusing on basic literacy and numeracy skills. Life skills is mentioned as particularly important in reinforcing messages related to HIV/AIDS. The document also says that schools will also be expected to develop and teach other skill-focused subjects (not more than two) that would be non-examinable, aimed at “local enrichment and diversification of the curriculum”

At the secondary level, relevance will be ensured through reviewing and reforming the present curriculum in order to incorporate emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS, and also to prepare students for the world of work. At the tertiary level, relevance would be achieved by re-orientating tertiary institutions to make them more responsive to the needs of the Malawian society. Research and academic programs would also be strengthened so that at least 50 percent of the programs become courses that are demanded by the labour market.

3.1.3.2 Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR)

The PCAR documents say that the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) is one of the first steps in implementing PIF objectives. The PCAR process is expected to be very different from the curriculum review and reform processes of the past in that as many stakeholders and consumers of educational services as can be reached are being invited to participate in the process. These stakeholders and consumers include MOEST
officials, donors, academics, classroom teachers, politicians, community leaders, parents, and learners. They are all being asked to experience the process through a workbook called *Journeys Through PCAR (1)*\(^{10}\) in which they are being asked to explore their vision of a child after (primary) school – what the child would need to know, what s/he would be able to do, and the sort of person s/he should be (*Journeys Through PCAR (1)*, 2001, p. 14). The stakeholders and consumers are also being asked to think about the type of (primary) education system that would be needed to ensure that schools produce their vision of the child after his/her school experience. I wasn’t able to interview people who had worked their way through *Journeys Through PCAR (1)*, and the project manager was not available to tell me if there were people who had and what their responses were.

### 3.1.3.3 World Bank

The World Bank is a major financier of education in developing countries. It is, therefore, one of the major multinational institutions, besides UNESCO, UNICEF and the G8 that is actively involved in spelling out the role of education in developing countries and ensuring that the EFA project succeeds. Some Malawi-specific works cited in this study may bear authors’ names when, in fact, they were commissioned or financed by the World Bank and other international donor agencies. These include the PIF, PRSP, and EFA documents as well as some of the works by individual Malawians or MOEST such as Milner, Chimombo, Banda, and Mchikoma, (2001), Ngaye, (1991), and MOEST/UNICEF (1998).

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\(^{10}\) This workbook was the only one that had been produced by the time of my data collection and it only covered the first four years of primary school. I was told *Journeys Through PCAR (2)* was in print.
3.1.3.4 G8

The G8 main document I studied is the report on the education taskforce for the 2002 Kananaskis conference held in Alberta, Canada. The taskforce started by launching an e-mail discussion in which participants were asked to discuss nine questions. These questions were based on the concern G8 countries place on education in developing countries because:

"... education is a fundamental human right. Like good health, it is central to individual self-realization. It is a powerful instrument for building dynamic economies. It is a bedrock of democratic societies. And it can be the foundation for building a world where values of openness, understanding and respect for others triumph over those which promote exclusion, mistrust and resentment." (Part of the introduction to the e-mail discussion framework for G8 Education Task Force Consultations by CIDA, 2002).

The G8 countries claimed that the goals they had set for themselves were at risk, and that the time had come for action. Specifically they believed that achieving EFA requires effective delivery of assistance on the ground, increased and predictable financial support for countries with sound policies, and coherent processes for organizing the international community (Report on Canadian Priorities for the 2002 G8 Summit, chapters 1 & 2).

The nine questions that participants were asked to discuss through an e-mail discussion list (consultation@g8education.gc.ca) were:

Question 1. Do the above reflect the dimensions of an appropriate G8 response to EFA?

Question 2. Developing a national education plan which addresses questions of access, ensures the efficient use of resources and generally meets the Dakar goals, is fundamentally the responsibility of a committed national government.
Are there specific interventions that the G8 countries should consider in support of these elements of national plans?

Question 3. How can the G8 play a constructive role in supporting an agenda of education for peace?

Question 4. What might be done to improve the coherence of the PRSP/SWAps, UN and EFA processes? Do the roles of the various international partners need to be better defined in support of developing countries?

Question 5. Given that PRSP type processes and concessionary financing are not the norm for E-9 countries, what are the best ways for the international community to assist their achievement of EFA goals? Is there a specific G8 role?

Question 6. How should the G8, and donors more generally, respond to meeting the educational needs of children in countries affected by conflict?

Question 7. How can the G8 best contribute to addressing the above capacity challenges? Are there particular initiatives or institutions which should be priority areas for strengthening?

Question 8. The dramatic decline in the cost of information and communications technologies may offer particular promise in addressing some of the above capacity constraints. Are there particular priority initiatives that the G8 should pursue in this area which could effectively address these challenges and reinforce the work of the Digital Opportunities Task Force?

Question 9. What criteria should be used in judging whether EFA plans are "credible" and whether countries are "seriously committed" to implementing them?
What steps should donors, and the G8 in particular, take to mobilize resources in support of EFA?

3.1.3.5 National Education Goals

There are eight National Education Goals in the American educational system which are measured every year nationally and at the state level. These goals were adopted in 1990 with the belief that they represent America's highest education priorities which were important in helping American students as a future workforce in meeting their technological, scientific, and economic challenges (NEGP, 1998, p. 1). The eight goals are:

- Goal 1. Ready to learn
- Goal 2. School Completion
- Goal 3. Student Achievement and Citizenship
- Goal 4. Teacher Education and Professional Development
- Goal 5. Mathematics and Science
- Goal 6. Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning
- Goal 7. Safe, Disciplined, and Alcohol- and Drug-free Schools
- Goal 8. Parental Participation

There does not seem to be a corresponding Canadian version of National Education Goals although browsing through the British Columbia (BC) government website and clicking on education, one finds that some of the issues in the American goals are being addressed. For example, there are sections on:
• Career Planner for Students and Parents
• Skills Development;
• Education: Programs and Services for Parents of K-12 Students;
• Programs and Services for Students, and
• Industry Training and Apprenticeship.

(http://www.gov.bc.ca/bvprd/bc/channel.do?action=theme&channelID=-
8409&navId=NAV_ID_province).

These suggest that the website was developed with what are assumed to be the goals of education in BC in mind.

3.1.3.6 Canadian Residential Schools

I read some works on Canadian residential schools by Celia Haig-Brown and Jean Barman, and several documents produced by the Anglican Church in Canada explaining the Church’s involvement in the education of First Nations children and the efforts the Church is making towards righting the wrongs it was involved in with regard to the education of First Nations Children in residential schools. This was because I wanted to understand more fully why even here in Canada, it was very difficult for colonized people to just accept Western forms of education as an absolute good. I particularly like the way the Anglican Bishop of New Westminster describes the experience of getting children educated from the perspective of the First Nations children and their parents. This is how he paints the picture:

Imagine for a moment that you are standing by a lake in Northern Canada. It’s a beautiful day. The mountains are pristine and clear, the sky is a deep blue, and across the sky comes a small plane which drops down on to the water … and two men come ashore. One of them is an RCMP officer and the other is a government
agent, and for the next few hours, these visitors speak to the elders in your village, and then you and the other children are gathered together by your parents, and your parents tell you that you have to go away ... to a special school. You will get an education. Education is a good thing. It will help you lead a better life, better than your parents have been able to have. You are a small child, and you are overwhelmed with fear and anxiety as you hear this news. You have never been away from your parents; you've never left your village but your parents whom you trust assure you that all will be well. The school is run by the Church. The Church will look after you, you will be safe, you will be cared for. You pack your few things and together with the other children in your village, you leave, and you have no idea where you are going or why. So began the experience of the residential schools for thousands of children in this country.\textsuperscript{11}

3.1.3.7 Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST)

Malawi national goals for education are printed in all curricula materials, especially for primary schools. There are seven, and they are listed as:

1. Citizenship skills
2. Ethical and socio-cultural skills
3. Economic development and environmental management skills
4. Occupational and entrepreneurship skills
5. Practical skills
6. Creative and resourcefulness skills
7. Scientific and technological development

As can be seen, the Malawi educational goals are not very different from the American educational goals or the various Canadian (BC) educational targets despite the fact that Malawi spends only US$39 per child per year for primary school and US$263 for

\textsuperscript{11} Excerpt from a speech by the Anglican Bishop of New Westminster, Vancouver, BC, distributed to all parishes in his diocese to launch the \textit{Honouring Our Commitment Campaign} which begun in January this year to raise funds as part of the restitution and reconciliation process.
secondary education (MOEST/UNICEF, 1998)\textsuperscript{12}, as opposed to over US$2000 per child per year in Britain (http://www.cyber.rdg.ac.uk/people/R.Bentley/educn.htm downloaded on December 25, 2003). It is not surprising, therefore, to find that schools in Malawi have basically nothing that can help them achieve the stated national goals. This is where Serpell’s alternative metaphors for schooling become important in discussing my findings and in understanding why the Malawi Government and the people of Malawi still believe that education will eventually lead them to economic and social development at the level of other countries of the world.

3.2 Issues of Validity and Reliability

There are several issues that could have affected the validity and reliability of this study. The first is the fact that all responses are supposed to be based on the respondent’s personal experiences. And as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) say, our knowing is tentative because it is influenced by our positioning. When our position shifts, our knowing also shifts. There have been many national (political, religious, cultural) events in Malawi which must have shifted people’s positions so many times, especially the older people. Besides national events, each person has his/her own personal events that could also shift one’s position, like not realizing one’s personal educational goals. This may be one reason why the results of this study may not be generalizable to the whole Malawian population.

\textsuperscript{12} This is the 1995/6 education expenditure which reflects an increase in education spending as a result of implementing the Free Primary Education initiative. Funding for education may actually have dropped by the time I was collecting data in 2003 due to more pressing national problems such as famine. Some donors such as the GTZ and the World Bank had also stopped direct funding to education by 2000.
Secondly, it is not possible to tell whether the responses represent overall feelings and experiences of the respondents or were based on single incidences that the respondents found most traumatic or enjoyable. I can only assume that the narratives are based on wider experiences since Clandinin and Connelly (2000) say that it is impossible to look at one event or one time without seeing the event(s) or time(s) nested within (p.16). Given that the Malawi society is essentially an oral society even today, the selection of research participants according to historical events was a way of ensuring that as much information as possible is obtained as people told their stories across several historical periods.

Thirdly, collecting data when participants were under a lot of stress as was the case when I was collecting data from the teachers in 2001 and later in the face of severe famine in 2003, could have meant that the amount and quality of the data greatly depended on the perceived advantages and disadvantages that participants saw in being part of the study. I also appreciate that how the participants thought I portrayed myself to them was important – Did I look sympathetic? Did I really understand and appreciate their problems? Was I prepared to forget my own problems first and help them deal with their problems to create space for them to deal with my problems?

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) say that what is told, as well as the meaning of what is told, is shaped by the researcher-participant relationship (p. 95). As a teacher, I very much wanted to construct meanings collaboratively with the teachers, and as a parent, I also wanted to do the same with the participants from the Domasi/MIE locale, the
“parents”. I realized, however, that the data and meanings were probably more researcher-influenced because both teachers and “parents” must have seen me as part of the government machinery even if I took time to disassociate my research from the work I do at the MIE. In the case of my visits to the schools, the vehicle I was using had a government number plate and was clearly labeled as a MOEST vehicle. The “parents”, on the other hand, have always regarded MIE as a government institution.

Fourthly, I consider relativism as discussed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as a factor that has a bearing on my study, especially because a language other than English was primarily used for data collection in both the schools and the Domasi/MIE locale. If ordinarily each person has his/her own interpretation of events, the language used will also have a bearing on that interpretation. In the case of teachers, although I gave them a chance to write their answers in either Chiche_a or English, the use of English in the questionnaire could have made them feel compelled to use English. This could be another reason why most teachers were reluctant to respond in writing as they may have felt that their command of the English language was not good enough for them to express their feelings more fully. On my part, I had to use English for the questionnaire since it is the official language and its use is encouraged at all times, especially where the communication and interaction is more of a business nature than a casual or friendly one. Also, using Chiche_a in the questionnaire would have given those who do not speak Chiche_a as a first language an excuse to refuse to participate. Some teachers could even have felt slighted as that would have implied that I did not expect them to understand English well enough to complete the questionnaire even if it may be true that most
Malawian teachers have limited competencies as observed by Lewis (1970), because of their poor academic and professional backgrounds.

The official requirement to conduct business in English has a limiting effect on anyone whose first language is not English to express themselves or explain what they mean since words that express feelings tend to be very imprecise. There were a number of comments that I could tell were probably being translated from Chiche_a because the teachers were thinking in Chiche_a. (I still do that, too, even with my considerably many more years of schooling than the teachers in my study). Most of the untrained or temporary teachers have only ten years of schooling instead of the usual twelve years plus two years or more teacher education courses. I, therefore, seriously doubted the ability of most of the teachers to understand what I wanted them to do, and do it well. I think the use of English for the questionnaire was really guided by a need to create good public relations and not just because it was required.

In the case of the “parents”, the discussions were in Chiche_a which means that some meanings and nuances could have been lost in translating the interviews into English. This raises the question of how much the text is the researcher’s voice and how much is the participants’ voice. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain how difficult it is to create a research text that speaks to, and reflects upon the audiences’ voices, especially if the researcher “struggles to express one’s own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants’ storied experiences and to represent their voices” (p. 147). This problem was very real for me as both the teachers and the “parents” asked me questions
or wanted me to give them my opinion on the issues I was asking them to discuss with me. This was truly an experience in collaborating with my research participants that a researcher may not get in a purely quantitative research design.

Fifthly, the fact that at the time of data collection, the relationship between teachers and their employer (MOEST) was a love-hate relationship, it is possible that teachers could have been exaggerating information hoping to get the attention of MOEST officials through my study. For example, some of the temporary teachers who had been waiting for a formal training opportunity and certification wondered if I was not in a position to influence those responsible for their training to speed up the process. Of course, that was something I, too, would have loved to see happen but I really did not have the power to do much about it. I had been told the problem was financial and the government said it was still looking for the money to complete training the teachers.

With the “parents”, there seemed to be a certain measure of skepticism as to the “whole truth” about the purpose of the research, and if their opinions really did matter and would be valued. For example, after I had explained the purpose of my research and the kind of data I was looking for to one of the community groups, one of the participants asked me if I wasn’t looking for that information in the wrong place, and why I didn’t know the people who really “knew” such information especially when I claimed I was coming from the MIE. Although in the end he accepted my explanation and agreed to participate, this question left me wondering if this man, who obviously knew much more than the rest of the people in the village, had a lot more to lose if I turned out to be an informer. I
wondered if he was genuinely surprised or afraid because he was not sure if the new government was democratic enough to allow free speech. Skepticism, however, could not be limited to the "parents". The teachers, too, could have been skeptical even if they didn't express it, given the fact that "Malawi does not have the tradition of consulting stakeholders, including teachers, parents, communities, local leaders, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in education" (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003, p. 505).

Finally, my own experiences as a classroom teacher, as a mother of grown up children who have been successful in this same school system, and my long involvement with primary teachers in the implementation of curricular innovations could have had an effect on the way I saw or understood certain issues which I included or excluded from the questionnaire. For example, I really did not have any idea how some parents found it difficult to keep their children in school. My assumption was that people who make the decision to send their children to school and are prepared to feed them and support them in the best way possible, the children should be able to stay in school and complete the cycle unless they fail a national examination. Some participants in this study, however, told me that this was not always the case. For example, their children often willingly shared their school snacks with their friends who may not have had breakfast before going to school, or bigger boys simply snatched it from them. This meant that their children were hungry most of the time they were at school. Where the children were given money to buy snacks at school, the children got persuaded by their friends to skip school and use the money to watch X-rated films in illegal "movie houses" which were
littered all over their trading centre. The children rarely reported these incidents. Instead, they pretended to have been at school and sometimes showed work that did not make sense to those parents who were literate, as “proof” that they had been to school. One woman said that she now has to go all the way to school with her grandson to make sure that he gets to school and enters his classroom. This was very revealing to me because my community is very different. Although my children went to a public government-funded school, it was one of the best schools in the community and most of the children had parents who were university lecturers or top government officials. For them, going to school and staying there was not an option and they knew there was no way they could cheat on that and get away with it. I didn’t even expect them to.

3.3 Ethical issues

I consider the issue of confidentiality to be the major ethical issue in this study. This is because, as stated above, some people still tend to be guarded when it comes to expressing views about government policy. It was very important, therefore, to get MOEST’s support for this study to assure participants that I was not working for some “subversive” group, and that the data would be used only for the intended purpose. In the case of the questionnaire, participants were not asked to write their name although I indicated that they should write the name of their school and other biographic information that would only be used to help me understand why they responded to some of the items the way they did. I did not ask for names of the “parents”, either, except for the first names of the in- and out-of-school participants. I addressed the “parents” as
Ma'am or Sir, or the first speaker or previous speaker, or I would say, "the gentleman in the corner said ..."

Another important ethical issue involved the question of compensating research participants. I could not ignore the fact that there is a feeling in Malawi that academics do research because they make much more money than what they are paid for their more regular duties such as teaching and supervision of students. This is because many internationally-funded researchers tend to give monetary incentives to research participants – a process which local researchers feel has contaminated the research environment (informal discussion with a colleague from the Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi, 2003). The fact that I am doing my PhD in Canada placed me in the category of international researchers with "so much money to spend".

Realizing that this was going to be a big problem for me with regard to gaining the trust of the research participants, and also to avoid being seen as only interested in what I could get from them and not to contribute to their welfare, I bought a soccer ball for each school I visited and gave pencils and pens to all the teachers in the schools whether they completed the questionnaires or not. I also gave pens and pencils to the "parents" and facilitated their travel where the village heads had invited people from long distances from his/her headquarters. These gifts seemed to make my case stronger that I was not making money by conducting the study because these gifts do not cost a lot of money and they are related to school work. I also hope the gifts demonstrated that I was not blind to their needs and was willing to share with them whatever I had.
In one school, the teachers had decided that individuals should decide for themselves whether they wanted to participate in the study or not. After the discussions with the teachers who had been willing to participate, I gave them the soccer ball, emphasizing that I hoped that they would find it useful also as a netball so the girls could have access to it. Complete silence fell in the room. It was as if lightning had struck us dumb.

Suddenly one of the teachers dashed out. A few moments later he was coming back with the head-teacher in tow. I was really frightened now. In all the other schools, the balls were received with no particular drama. I was about to start apologizing when I heard the head-teacher panting and almost shouting his thank-yous. It was then that the other teachers found their voices and explained to me what had happened in their school the week before. They told me that they had painstakingly managed to raise enough money to buy a soccer ball which they needed for their school team to join the local schools soccer league but the ball had been stolen a week after it had been bought. They showed me the window where the thieves had gained entry into the storage room and that there was no way the school could ask children to raise money again. They showed me projects around the school that had stopped because they all agreed that buying a soccer ball was more important. They couldn’t believe, therefore, that they were actually getting a new soccer ball for free. It was a miracle and they all wished everyone knew that I had brought them a ball. Maybe all teachers would have decided to participate, they told me. This incident made me feel good because it demonstrated that I was careful enough to not make the gifts I had act as baits. It also demonstrates the effect of poverty and lack of resources on running schools. The ball cost me less than CN$15 and yet by Malawian standards this was a major expenditure for students and their parents.
The question of going to schools at a time when teachers were implementing some form of labour action also constituted an ethical dilemma as it meant that I was asking the teachers to go against the labour action. This, however, was not much of a problem in the schools I visited. It appeared that no school really wanted to implement the labour action in full since TUM had distanced itself from their own call for strike action. The teachers, therefore, accepted and allowed me to spend the day in their schools because they could use my presence to claim that they were working if a ministry official showed up to check if the teachers were on strike or not. The teachers understood that my study had nothing or very little to do with their employer and that it would not make any difference to their situation whether they completed the questionnaires or not. Teachers “completed” the questionnaires during school time but not when they were supposed to be teaching or doing something else with their students. The head teachers assured me that the teachers were not using teaching time to have discussions with me. There were a few exceptions, however, where the head teachers told me that it had been decided that all the teachers would complete the questionnaire at the same time in one room so I could explain things to them as they wrote their responses. In such cases, students were given extended breaks or had work which was supervised by class leaders.

The famine that hit the whole of Southern Africa from September 2002 to April, 2003 also created an ethical dimension. I conducted the interviews and focus group discussions with the “parents” during the rainy season when they needed all the time to work in their gardens, knowing that I would not be compensating them for their time. I had planned to provide food during the interviews because cultural norms require one to,
as Kiluva-Ndunda (2001) explains. Kiluva-Ndunda did her data collection in Kenya and reports that she prepared food for more than 150 people during the course of her study (p. 50). In many cases, I was not prepared for the large numbers of people who turned up for the “interviews”. In such cases, I just gave them the pens and pencils which I hoped they would give to their children who were still in school.

In a very interesting way, collecting data in the Domasi/MIE locale helped to solve a real problem I had – that of transportation. Just like in 2001, transportation was a problem in 2003 because of the rains and lack of sufficient funds to hire a vehicle that was more suited to bad road conditions. So, although I had planned to interview participants at least two or three times to make sure I got their stories right, I could not always make it back to the villages. In some cases, I managed to go back once but on my second visit, I had a feeling that the participants were not willing to spend any more time on the exercise, especially when they would rather be working in their fields. With almost nothing to compensate them for their time with me, I could not find a reasonable justification to insist that I come back for more discussions. The best I could do was to spend as much time with an interviewee or focus group discussants as would be comfortable for them to allow me to go over what I had written down as their responses and the arguments that may have been presented during the discussions. That gave participants a chance to correct me if they thought I got something wrong, or to add something they felt I had left out. Sometimes this would start the discussion all over again. At this point, focus group discussion participants who wanted to leave were allowed to.
3.4 Data Analysis

Due to the fact that several methods were used to collect the data, I searched for a way that could help me to discuss the data holistically and present them in a coordinated fashion. Darlington and Scott (2003) say that writing up a mixed method study is always very difficult since the data are often woven together in order to illuminate or explore the issues more satisfactorily. In general, they see quantitative data as being used to set the scene in order for the researcher to give information about "how much of this" or "how many of that" (p. 167). In my case, I found that at times, it became important to discuss some point as I presented the data since this is basically a narrative report, and as Darlington and Scott note, the descriptions and interpretations often became very intertwined. I, therefore, found Farrell's (1992) ideas very helpful in sorting and organizing the data since what is really at the centre of the concept of EFA is the whole idea of equal access to education in order to develop all the human capital of a nation and help all individuals to gain the skills they need to be successful in a modern society.

Farrell (1992) suggests that for a national educational system to benefit everyone equally, it should be one that offers equality of access, equality of survival, equality of output, and equality of outcome to every one. In the Malawi case, these four "equalities" are influenced by factors such as our colonial experience and its close links to Christianity and the educational system that the missionaries introduced; the extent of personal and national poverty and unemployment, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. All these affect individual and national participation in education and the ability to measure up to global trends that are defining national and individual "successes". In such cases, Juma (2002)
says that it is necessary to ask the following questions which I found helpful when reflected upon in light of what Farrel says. Juma asks:

- To what extent is the educational endeavour affected by processes of colonization, conceptions of modernity and Westernization?
- To what extent is the educational endeavour affected by processes of globalization that are threatening autonomy of national educational systems and the sovereignty of the nation-state as the ultimate ruler in democratic societies?
- To what extent is the educational endeavour affected by poverty that has led to poor countries (like Malawi) to become so dependent on donor aid? (pp. 143-145).

In the next chapter, I weave together Farrel's, Juma's and Serpell's ideas in order to make sense of the findings.

3.5 Limitations

There were several challenges that I faced doing this study, especially because I wanted it to reflect the situation in the whole country even when I knew I did not have enough time and other resources to adequately collect nationally representative data. From a quantitative research point of view, for a study to be a true reflection of what is going on in the whole country, a random sample drawn from all the schools in the country, and several case studies done in different communities in the country would have been ideal. But that would have required many more resources, especially time, money, vehicles, and a good working knowledge of triangulating research methods to ensure that the data were
analyzed meaningfully. Generalizations from this study, therefore, may be considered as "overstretching" the point by some readers, especially those who are faithful to quantitative research methodologies. However, the limitations I am concerned about here are those that pertain to what I did and the data I collected. These include the role of memory in report writing, keeping a record of the field experience, the voice used in the report, and the practical problems associated with the data collection process itself.

3.5.1 The Role of Memory in Report Writing

All the interview and focus group discussion data were from participants' memories. This was to be expected as Malawians, like most pre-colonial Africans, still value the spoken word more than the written word. Participants in my study, both functionally literate\textsuperscript{13} and illiterates, made no references to personal journals or books, the way it would have been more common in Western cultures. Everything they told me was based on what they could remember about their own school experiences or what they had heard from others. Even those key informants who were much more educated than others, like those with doctoral and master's degrees, none made an attempt to refer to any written material except for official documents. Vansina (1972) notes that speech in an oral society is given the same reverence as the written word in literate societies and, in spite of the problems that oral reports may present, such as lack of a precise chronology which is the backbone of history, one can't imagine a history of Africa without recourse to oral traditions since much of what has to be said, no other voice can tell (pp. 432-435). This was more than thirty years ago and yet it is still very true of Malawi today.
3.5.2 Keeping a Record of the Field Experience

Believing that Malawians were now free to express themselves on any topic since the new government promises to guarantee freedom of speech, I bought a voice recorder and a camera as part of my data collection equipment. When I discussed with other researchers my intention to use a voice recorder as a data collection tool, I was warned that my data collection would probably end the moment I mentioned that I wanted to use electronic devices to record what the participants told me because they had similar experiences with their own research projects. Apparently, Malawians are not really ready to trust people that much despite the assurances from the government. All the information I got was, therefore, from the participants’ memories and I had to record as much as I could using pen and paper. This meant that I had to make decisions as to what to record and what not to because I thought I could remember it easily so that I could also be attentive and remain focused to the discussions. What I recorded must have been what made sense to me at the time and ignored what I did not quite understand or did not make much sense to me then. During the report writing exercise, however, I have been finding that the notes sometimes remind me of something a participant said that I did not record because I thought I wasn’t going to use that information but suddenly makes much more sense and I make the decision to included it in the report. All I have at that point is my memory to work from.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) say that the need to keep field notes carefully cannot be overemphasized because research purposes sometimes become less clear or shift and

13 A “functionally literate” person can actually understand what they read or write in at least one language. This term is used to make a distinction between those who gained usable literacy skills at school and those
change during and/or after the research process. They say that where field notes are not properly organized, the researcher ends up writing most of the report from memory. Memory, however, is selective – shaped and retold in the continuum of one’s experiences. They add that even when field notes are well organized, researchers can still embellish their reports with what they think are recollected memories triggered by the notes (pp. 142-3). This was a real problem for me because what I recorded most likely reflected my own interests and motivations in the research. A voice recorder would have ensured that everything that was said during the interviews and focus group discussions was recorded and available for me to review as many times as I needed during the report writing process.

3.5.3 The Voice Used in the Report

I tried to capture the voices of the participants as much as I could given that most of the conversations, especially with the “parents”, were done in our national language (Chiche_a). This could lead to my being accused of having “stolen and published” other people’s voices or drowning them so that when I do give them a chance to speak, it is nothing more than my own voice code (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 75). While some of these accusations may not be avoided, I hope that readers will recognize that I represented the participants as best I could, especially because the national language also happens to be my mother tongue, and I consider myself to be very good at it. Where English was used, it was often used as it would typically be used in Malawi, what is now becoming to be known as Malawian English, just as we have American, Canadian, or Australian “Englishes”. In such cases, I may have rephrased the Malawian English to who didn’t because they dropped out of school early or did not have their learning disabilities addressed.
conform to the way that would be more acceptable in general English thus losing some of the nuances that could only be represented by the original language.

3.5.4 Problems Associated with the Data Collection Process

Collecting the data over a period of two years means that some shifts were inevitable in the educational system as well as in the way people think about issues in their daily life. For example, by 2003, MOEST had made many promises to address some of the teachers’ grievances that were the cause of much of the apathy that was evident in the schools in 2001. My failure to revisit the schools in 2003 is, therefore, regrettable because I have no way of knowing whether mere promises have a positive effect on teachers’ attitudes towards their work and/or that they can improve teachers’ actual work performance.

The participants in this study form an opportunity sample because of the problems I had in trying to find a representative sample. Cook (2001) says that in sensitive research contexts, it is acceptable to use a convenient /opportunity sample as long as outcomes are treated with the appropriate tentativeness. Cook thinks that non-random sampling yields valuable observations and insights (p. 383) because the participants’ voluntary participation can be assumed to represent their commitment to the issues in the study. I agree with Cook. I found most of the people who chose to participate in this study very enthusiastic, maybe because I was emphasizing on participants’ own experiences and the fact that it was acceptable to narrate their experiences instead of insisting that they give
me a written account. This may have showed that I recognized that the Malawian research context still remains a sensitive research site.
4.1 Findings

While human capital and modernization theories provide a useful backdrop to the understanding of the historical, social, economic, and political contexts of the key features in the Malawian education system, I also found Farrell’s (1992) ideas about Education very useful in reporting and discussing my findings. Farrell believes that different individuals and different social groups utilize education differently; that education affects people’s destinies differently, and that for a national educational system to benefit everyone equally, it should be one that offers *equality of access, equality of survival, equality of output*, and *equality of outcome* to every one (pp. 107-122). These ideas are very helpful especially when they are aligned with Serpell’s (1993) metaphors for education. This helped me to show how the development of human capital and the process of modernization in Malawi are, in fact, ultimately mediated by personal and national poverty, and the global trends that are impacting on Malawians’ way of life today. I did this by answering Juma’s (2002) three questions:

- To what extent is the educational endeavour affected by processes of colonization, conceptions of modernity and Westernization?

- To what extent is the educational endeavour affected by the processes of globalization that threaten the autonomy of the national educational system and the sovereignty of the nation-state as the ultimate ruler in a democratic society?
• To what extent is the educational endeavour affected by poverty that leads to a poor country (like Malawi) to become so dependent on donor aid?

Juma (2002) explains that while globalization offers the exchange of cultural norms, values, beliefs, and traditions, it also extends the potential for cultural annihilation through the “McDonaldization” of the world. Cook (2001) makes similar observations with regard to Egypt. Cook says that all the participants in his study agreed that education should lead to marketable skills, better citizenry, and an enhanced quality of life but that, at the same time, European education has been instrumental in dividing developing societies into two distinct halves – one retaining traditional values, the other modeling itself after European culture. In the Egyptian situation, the traditional half wanted education to be based on the teachings of Islam while the “Westernized” half just wanted education to help their society achieve modernity as defined by Western standards (p. 405). It was, therefore, important for me to watch for some of these dichotomies as Malawians explained the role of education in their daily lives.

4.1.1 Equality of Access

Farrell (1992) describes equality of access as “the probabilities of children from different social groupings getting into the school system, or some particular level or portion of it (p. 159). Only one of the participants in my study expressly mentioned access as having been a problem in his efforts to get educated. This could be because participants were thinking about the present FPE and how that has “removed” barriers to education. He explained that he had to repeat Standard 2 (Grade 2) because middle school (Standards 3-
5) was too far from his home for him to walk to school and back everyday. Repeating Standard 2 gave him time to grow up a bit and mentally prepare for the long walk to school for Standard 3. Another participant who used to leave home very early in the morning and wash in the river which he had to cross to go to school, did not see this as a particular problem, probably because he was a little older when he started school, or he just enjoyed the company of the other boys. He explained that they had to leave for school at about 5:00 am to go up the mountain where the school was. (Most mission stations were built on higher ground, often on hill-tops or plateaus or gentle mountain slopes. Many stations, including Domasi Mission, are still operational in these difficult-to-access places).

Problems of access were more evident at the school sites. I made note of these mainly by taking photographs (see chapter 2) to help me remember clearly how the problems presented themselves. In one of the schools, the local council had obtained money to expand the school in order to increase enrolment but they did not address the problems that the school had that made it inaccessible to some children in the area, in the first place. The head teacher explained that the location of his school posed real access problems to many children. The first problem was that for some children to come to school, they have to cross a busy road, and because the school is on a curve and there are no proper signs for motorists to know that there is a school around the corner, the road posed a real danger to many children. The second problem was that the drainage system of the road was clogged so that when it rained, the school area got flooded from run-off water from the road. The head teacher explained that sometimes the water level was so
high in some of the drains that children who have to cross them cannot come to school for days when it rains heavily.

In another school, the problem was that the school was not easily accessible to some teachers. The teachers explained that the school had been moved from its old site to the present site because the old school was on the side of a river that was less populated. There was no good bridge for children to cross during the rainy season and so when the district council got money to expand the school, they decided to build a new school instead, on the present site which is in the community where most of the children live. The money, however, was just sufficient to build a few classroom blocks and not enough for teachers’ houses. Teachers still live in the houses at the old school site which now means that when it rains and the river cannot be crossed easily, it is the teachers who cannot come to school.

4.1.2 Equality of survival

Farrell (1992) says that equality of survival is the probability of children from various social groupings staying in the school system to some defined level, usually the end of a complete cycle (primary, secondary, or a higher level) (p. 159). In Malawi, FPE was implemented on the understanding that access and survival were the major issues because students dropped out of schools before completing the cycle when they could no longer pay the fees. It was also assumed that the problem affected girls more than boys and so free schooling was implemented much earlier for girls than for boys under the Girls’ Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) project (Kadzamira & Rose,
The data I collected suggest that issues of survival are affected as much by what goes on in the school, the government educational policies with regard to schools, teacher, and student welfare, as are affected by the failure of families to meet the costs of schooling. I do not precisely sort out the data according to these categories because I did not ask participants to speak to each of these variables. The following points, however, embrace many of these variables. This is what I was able to extract them from what participants said during the discussions.

4.1.2.1 The state of the schools and teachers' perspectives on survival

School visits revealed that all the schools I visited did not have sufficient classrooms. Many classes were being held in the hot sun or under trees. The situation was particularly bad in city schools where some of the classrooms had been allocated to secondary school students under the community day secondary school initiative. In rural areas, school buildings were generally in very bad shape. In two cases, the school councils had initiated the building of additional classrooms and teachers' houses but everything was going on so slowly that some of the building materials that had been bought before the work started had either been stolen or had become unusable (bags of cement that had hardened and could no longer be used for construction work).

The school administrators explained to me that education officials had told them that the building of new classrooms was supposed to be a joint venture between the government and the community. The government would supply the major building materials such as cement, iron roofing sheets, and timber, and the communities would be expected to
provide bricks and labour. The communities, however, were having difficulties organizing themselves to mould the bricks and raise enough money to pay for skilled labour such as builders and carpenters to complete the work quickly. It was also difficult for people to come and work on the project for days when they were not being paid since this meant that their own work suffered.

Figure 4 - 1: An incomplete classroom with the roof provided by the government and waiting for the community to complete it.

Other problems that affect equality of survival in schools were given by teachers as follows:

- The general poor school conditions that included classrooms that leaked when it rained; children sitting on dirt floors which makes their clothes dirty in one day, and yet teachers insist on their students wearing clean clothes to school. In classrooms with cemented floors, the cold floors often made children ill and so contributed to high absenteeism.
- The poverty in many homes which contributes to many children coming to school hungry. Poverty also forces many children to stay away from school in order to do what they need to do to find food.

- Lack or shortage of instructional materials makes teaching and learning very uninteresting.

- Lack of teacher support from education advisors which makes teaching very stressful especially in the absence of appropriate instructional materials.

- Large classes which are partly due to the FPE policy.

- Lack of a safe place to store instructional materials or to leave things for students for their own private study. Most schools had no offices or storage rooms, and the classrooms had no doors or windows. Domestic animals such as chickens, goats, cows, and pigs from the villages wander in and out of the classrooms after school. People also steal any school equipment that is left in the classrooms.

- At one rural school, the teachers complained that the chief in whose village the school was located, did not want the school and was doing everything in his power to make the lives of the teachers miserable. Absenteeism in this school was reported to be particularly high as parents did not really care whether their children were in school or not. In urban schools, teachers reported that some students, especially in Standards 1-3, often left home for school but spent their time watching videos in video stores. Most of the videos were for adult viewing but the store owners take the children's lunch money and encourage the children to stay and watch the videos instead of encouraging them to go to school.
Early marriages were a particularly problem in one of the rural schools I visited. The teachers did not tell me about this themselves. They told me about it as a response to my asking why there were so few students in Standard 8. In most schools, Standards 1-4 and 8 are the largest classes – Standards 1-4 because the children are too young to help out at home and parents sometimes use the schools as “drop-in” centres for their young children to give themselves time to work on other family projects; Standard 8 because students who do not get selected to Form 1 often repeat Standard 8 until they get selected or give up. Girls are usually in much smaller numbers in Standard 8 as they start dropping out much earlier and for those who reach Standard 8, many do not repeat more than once if they do not get selected. But in this particular school, both boys and girls were in very small numbers in the Standard 8 class compared to the enrolment in Standard 7 or Standard 8 classes in other schools.

I asked the teachers where the students who should be in Standard 8 were because judging from the Standard 7 enrolment in the school and the fact that they told me that sometimes nobody gets selected to go to Form 1, Standard 8 would have been a very large class. The teachers told me that most of the students left school to get married. I said, “Yes, that would be expected of the girls, and where are the boys?” They told me that both boys and girls get married young in their area because the boys did not have anywhere to go if they did not get selected to Form 1 and they did not like repeating Standard 8 too many times. Getting married and starting a family seemed to be a preferred option to repeating Standard 8 several times. I was flabbergasted because this was the first time I heard about early marriages involving boys. Of course, I am
assuming that the boys get married before they are 20 but they could be older since this is also a cattle-raising area. It is possible that boys start school late in this area because they are required to look after cattle until their younger siblings are old enough to take over from them. This could mean that they start school when they are 10 or 12 years old. I really don’t know since I did not ask further questions.

Figure 4 - 2: A car rim is used as a school bell; doors on classrooms stolen and windows now have concrete vents making the classrooms dark and very hot in summer. They are also very cold in winter since there is nothing to keep the cold out on the doors and windows.

Source: ECK, 2001

4.1.2.2 “Parents” perspective on survival

The participants in the Domasi/MIE locale who I refer to as “parents” with quotation marks, were more comfortable explaining their views on equality of survival with regard to the school by explaining to me what they thought was wrong with the way schools are run today. Most of the older participants had been out of school for more than twenty to thirty years by the time of this data collection. Their understanding of what goes on in schools today was that there was not much that related to village life. They felt that this
made schooling less attractive to their children because the children did not see much connection between what goes on in the school and their home life. This they thought was one reason why many children have no problems dropping out of school even when parents are willing to meet the educational costs. They remembered that during their time, government officers and others from Jeane’s College (the predecessor of MIE) used to come and stay in the villages, often for several days to offer lessons on how to build houses (for men) and how the women should be caring for their homes. They were not required to go to school for these lessons which included all aspects of their daily life such as:

- food production,
- soil conservation,
- how to construct a pit latrine,
- how to build a kitchen with a rack for drying kitchen utensils,
- how to wash clothes and make a clothes line, and
- how to care for drinking water and prevent the breeding of mosquitoes.

“Parents” asked me how they could support or encourage teachers to do their work more conscientiously. “Do we have to send our children to private schools for a better education?” they asked me. One participant added, “You want to know what education means to us? Doesn’t one need a paper to show for his or her education? Our children are not getting these papers. Teachers are afraid of their pupils and their parents; afraid to punish their students when they are not doing their work. When they call us for
meetings, the meetings are always about work – construction of classrooms rather than academic matters. And the teachers are always right”.

The “parents” felt that FPE was not good enough for their children. They did not think much was being learned in school and that it wasn’t going to lead to their children getting the “papers” they need to secure jobs. Another “parent” commented, “There are just too many subjects in Standard 1; that is why they cannot learn anything. Children just need to know how to read and write in Standard 1”.

From the two student focus groups discussions, I learned that except for one girl, the students never enjoyed going to school either at the primary or secondary levels. The girls gave the following reasons for their dislike of school:

- They were often hungry at school which made them feel tired and disinterested in their school work.

- General cleaning duties were the primary responsibility of girls. They hated scrubbing washrooms, particularly.

- The teachers seemed to love punishing students for any offence. They hated being punished for speaking in class which was included in the term “making a noise”.

- One girl said her worst class was Standard 4. She said that the teacher that year was particularly mean to her students.

The boys gave the following reasons for their dislike of school:
• They did not think that what they learned in school met their needs, especially when they did not do well. I asked them what their needs were. One wanted to be an agricultural engineer, another a botanist, the third wanted to go into medicine (surgery), and the fourth wanted to be an electronics engineer. They said that they could not see how the education that was offered in their schools could help them realize these dreams.

• Teachers did not show much interest in them. It did not seem to matter to the teachers whether they were doing well or not.

• They felt the emphasis on GABLE worked against them. They saw the girls as being favoured. They asked me, "What kind of equality is that – promoting girls at the expense of boys?" They claimed that this was not helping the girls either and that men are being distrusted over women. "You can do as much for boys", they declared. One of the boys asked me if I was a parent. I said yes. He asked me if I would show open favouritism to one of my children, knowing that I risked that child being hated by his/her siblings. I replied, "I guess not". He retorted, "So why do you believe this is good for us? You do one thing at home and do something totally different when you are in your offices". I was quiet, wondering if all this was actually his own reasoning or it was what he hears from conversations in his home and at school.

The boys also explained that there was a lot of peer pressure to under-perform in schools, especially at the secondary school level. Three of the boys went to a residential secondary school where they experienced pressure not to spend too much time on their
school work. Fellow students, especially those who did not see much chance for themselves to pass national examinations had ways of stopping them from studying. Such students (who often come from wealthier families) would offer to take them out to a beer party or a dance even when they knew that they would be in trouble upon their return to their residences. They told me that the idea was to get them expelled from school or suspended for some time so that they could not write the final exams or if they did, they could not do well on the examinations.

4.1.2.3 Information from documents on survival

Information from documents on equality of survival came from two main documents: the Educational Policy Investment Framework (PIF) and the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) documents. Basically, both documents acknowledge the problems of survival as presented by the students, teachers and the “parents”. Between the two documents (PIF and PCAR), following problems were documented as affecting equality of survival in schools:

- Child labour which includes children working both in their own homes, and/or working for other people for wages.
- Early marriages which many used as a survival tactic, especially girls.
- Drug and alcohol abuse especially at secondary school level.
- Poor school facilities and uninteresting school programs.
- Poor teaching methods and oppressive school rules.
- Overcrowded classrooms.
- Poverty and hunger.
• Children’s special needs not recognized.
• Poor health.
• Lack of special security especially for girls at school – mistrust of teachers (fear that teachers and older boys would take advantage of girls to sexually abuse them).
• Poor sanitation and lack of clean drinking water.
• Poor teacher/parent relationships in some schools.
• Lack of employment opportunities for school leavers.
• Harsh or cruel and unsympathetic teachers, or unsupportive/intimidating teachers and school heads.
• Poor modelling by teachers both in terms of behaviour and work ethics.

These documents also included statistical data to help explain why these problems exist and persist in the Malawi educational system. These data include:

• Malawi is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa with a population density of 105 persons per sq km, but very poor with a GNP per capita of $210.
• Absolute\textsuperscript{14} poverty is 65 percent.
• 91 percent of unqualified teachers teach in rural schools where 85 percent of the population lives.
• Urban schools have a pupil:qualified teacher ratio of 1:66 while rural schools have a pupil:qualified teacher ratio of 1:128.
• Pupils:textbooks ratio ranges from 1:1 to 1:24.

\textsuperscript{14} This level is sometimes described as living on less than US$1.00 a day. At this level of poverty, people are unable to meet most of their daily basic needs.
• Almost all pupils have no access to supplementary readers from any form of library.
• There are questions about whether all instructional materials donated by UNICEF, USAID/GOM, Plan International, and Norad actually reached the designated recipients.
• Only 40 percent of teachers have good permanent houses.
• There are 23,273 permanent toilets for boys giving a 1:64 ratio instead of a 1:25 ratio.
• There are 23,910 girls' toilets which gives a 1:58 ratio instead of a 1:10 ratio.
• Between 22-25 percent of pupils repeat a class every year. Repeaters increase class size.

4.1.2.4 Government policies on education and their effect on survival

Two policies were particularly singled out by teachers and “parents”: the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy, and the policy about shared responsibility between the government and school communities. FPE was blamed for almost everything that is wrong with schools today and participants believed that was the main reason children are failing to persist in school today. The older “parents” (those who were in school before 1990) claimed that school conditions have never been good in Malawian schools but they persisted because they paid money for their education and sometimes had to walk long distances to school. These “parents” felt that only children with parents who can send their children to good private schools or send them to towns and cities to live
with relatives and go to school there had better chances of benefiting from their education.

The temporary teachers seemed to be the only ones who were happy with the FPE policy because it offered them jobs. Many of them were getting impatient, however, because they wanted to complete their formal training and be recognized as 'competent' teachers by everyone. The qualified teachers, however, felt that most of the temporary teachers were more of a problem than a help because there is no way of undoing the "harm" they were doing to the children. The children were in school only once and either they "get it" now or never. The students in the focus groups had not been through the FPE but had some experience of the GABLE policy which favoured girls over the boys because the policy assumed that boys were having it easy in school.

The policy about shared responsibility between the government and school communities which was integral to FPE was especially unwelcome to the "parents". They felt that it ignored the fact that their contribution was made at the expense of other things that were equally important in their lives. Some "parents" explained that it was easier to withdraw a child from school than to keep on spending long hours at school in construction work. Where monetary contributions had been solicited instead of labour, the amounts asked for were usually more than the fees that had been scraped. One "parent" explained that he did not think there was proper accounting for the money because the fundraising seemed never ending and yet the buildings were not going up.
4.1.2.5 Teacher and student welfare and survival

The fact that many teachers were unhappy meant that they could not really contribute much to their students’ learning. Their unwillingness to do their work efficiently put a limit on how much they could motivate their students to attend school. And since teachers are the only source of information in many cases, children’s access to knowledge and information became limited when teachers did devote their full attention to the education of their students, especially in situations of acute shortage of instructional materials. Teacher absenteeism was very high in many schools, thus, failing to model the practices they expected of their students. Teachers were away either sick or nursing someone who was sick in their family, or had gone to attend funerals, or wait for their pay at pay centres as arranged by MOEST. At every school I visited, there were more than two to five teachers absent depending on the number of teachers in the school. I was told by the school administrators that teachers who were absent often were those who were most frustrated. These teachers usually left their jobs altogether to work for institutions that paid better and on time because they were qualified teachers. That was why the temporary teachers were yearning for certification.

The removal of the requirement for school uniforms was also seen as affecting equality of survival both in rural and urban schools. The “parents said that they understood why their children felt ashamed going to school wearing the same clothes everyday because they could not afford change of clothes. This affected older girls more than boys and could explain why more girls leave school when they get into senior primary (Standards
6-8). The participants explained that uniforms made everyone *equal* while personal clothes were often used to show off the economic status of the child's family.

4.1.3 *Equality of Output*

Farrell (1992) describes *Equality of output* as the probabilities that children from various social groupings will learn the same things to the same level at a defined point in the schooling system (p. 159). Although this study is about curriculum and instruction, I did not collect data that specifically show how much children were learning in the schools I visited because this would have required more resources and possibly a separate study to test or evaluate teacher instruction and student achievement. In any case, if this was one of my goals right from the beginning, the teacher strikes would have made this very difficult. However, since teaching and learning are the fundamental aspects of education, the need to assess these processes independent of national examinations is urgent. So far, national examinations which are administered by the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) seem to be the only way that is being used by MOEST and government to assess progress toward achieving our national goals for education. And this has shown that we are doing very badly (MOEST, 2000c). There is, therefore, an urgent need for a study that can assess learning progress of individual learners that is not based on examinations but on learners' needs. It is difficult to see how a standardized curriculum can really achieve *equality of output* when applied to a whole population of learners with diverse learning needs in diverse learning environments.
3.1.4 Equality of Outcome

When there is no equality of access, equality of survival, and equality of output, it is hard to see how there can have equality of outcome. Farrell (1992) describes equality of outcome as the probabilities that children from various social groupings will live relatively similar lives subsequent to and as a result of schooling, that is, they will have equal incomes, have jobs of roughly the same status, have equal access to sites of political power, etc (p. 159). Probabilities of equality of outcome were my major motivation in this study because it seemed to me that “everyone” at World Bank, UNESCO, G8, and European Union, and to some extent, in MOEST, except me thought that this equality of outcome was actually achievable and that in Malawi we could achieve it through FPE. I had strong doubts about our education system serving our nation well enough to make this possible, especially when most of our children were failing their examinations every year. That seemed to be a sure sign that our children were never going to experience equality of outcome as adults. I thought this was obvious to everyone at educational policy-making levels. However, as more policies were being drafted and implemented, I started wondering if I had a problem – being too pessimistic and not being able to see all the “positive” things that everyone else was seeing happening in our educational system.

4.1.4.1 Findings that related to equality of educational outcome

In general, all participants were concerned about equality of educational outcome especially with regard to job access, any job even if the pay was going to be lower than
they would prefer. There were also other specific concerns that the various participants expressed during the discussions.

- **Equality of educational outcome concerns from student participants**

The boys and girls in the focus groups said that the only reason they kept going to school in spite of their negative feelings about school was because they had come to a personal awareness of the fact that schooling offered them the only chance out of poverty. I asked them at what point they became aware of this. The girls said that they began to see things more clearly in Standard 7 while the boys started making this realization in secondary school. Before this realization, they all (except one girls whose mother is a teacher) said that they went to school because their parents forced them to.

One of the girls said that she began to see how important being educated was when her sister found a job after Form 4 and she was able to send money regularly to her parents to help them with their daily needs. She said that she, too, wants to be able to help her family financially and that the only way that would be possible is if she stayed in school and did well at the Form 4 national examinations. Another girl said that her aunt was a doctor and that she likes her life-style. She will, therefore, stay in school until she completes so she can train as a nurse or a secretary.

The boys also knew why they had to stay in school and pass their examinations. They wanted to pursue professional careers such as an agricultural engineer, a botanist, a
surgeon, and an electronics engineer. They, however, did not think they had the right education to help them achieve their goals. They all had written their Form 4 Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) examinations and did not think they had the grades that could help them go to university. Only one of them had been invited to go and sit for the University Entrance Examinations (UEE) and he was not very hopeful that he would be selected to attend any of the university colleges even if he passed the UEE. This was because he had 33 points\textsuperscript{16} at MSCE. This meant that he would have to do extremely well at UEE for UEE to compensate for his 33 MSCE points.

The boys seemed to be more optimistic about using their education in other ways that could also lead to their enjoying a better life than what they had experienced at home. They explained that the four of them were close friends and that together, they were experimenting with play-writing, writing short stories, and were also trying to form a band that could play at concerts and other entertainment venues such as weddings and dances. They also thought that they had learned enough agriculture in school to help them successfully grow vegetables for sale. One of the boys added that if he had the money, he would learn to drive a truck so he could work as a driver for a haulage company.

\textsuperscript{15} In Malawi people sometimes call nurses and medical assistants doctors. I wasn't sure if the aunt was really a doctor or a nurse/medical assistant given my knowledge of the place where she said she was working. One would never expect to find a doctor there.

\textsuperscript{16} MSCE is graded by points. A student who wishes to study at university should not have more than 6 points per subject. The fewer the points the better. Basically, a student should score six points or less in six subjects (a maximum of 36 points) to be invited to sit for the UEE. Because there are more boys sitting for MSCE than girls, boys with fewer points, usually 20 points or less, stand a better chance of being selection to university than boys with 20 points or more. Girls often get university places even with the maximum 36 points.
Equality of educational outcome concerns from teachers

With teachers, the answers fell into two distinct categories depending on whether they were trained or untrained. The untrained teachers complained about the way MOEST was being unfair to them by not ensuring that they got formal training promptly so they could receive their teaching certificates. They argued that their not having formal recognition as teachers affected the way other teachers, students and parents thought about them and their work output. They were being blamed for all the problems in the schools and had been nick-named “poverty alleviation” teachers. They explained that to be called a “poverty alleviation” teacher meant that you are thought as being in the job because of the financial benefits rather than because you want to help children to learn. Having no teaching certificates also meant that they could not apply for promotions and were always being treated as if they knew nothing by the qualified teachers and yet the qualified teachers often refused to help them do their work more professionally.

Equality of outcome for the trained teachers was affected by where they had been posted to teach. Teachers in rural schools were the least informed about developments in their own ministry and the country as a whole. At one school, teachers did not know that MOEST had advertised posts that could make those who qualified move to better-paying jobs within the system like school administration or teacher supervision until the due date was well past. This was because the advertisement was only sent to the district education office and the education office did not have the resources to photocopy and send it to all the schools in the district. The school also has no telephone which meant that the district
education manager could not communicate the information by phone, either. This was also true of any other job opportunities that teachers in urban schools could take advantage of thus leading to more teachers in urban schools resigning from their MOEST jobs.

Another issue with regard to equality of outcome that affected qualified teachers at the time of my data collection was the government’s decision to pay civil servants differential housing allowances according to where they worked. Teachers in rural areas were to receive the least amount because it was assumed that housing was cheap in rural areas. This led to some teachers taking various forms of labour action which they felt did not actually amount to a strike but meant that very little school work was being done. They argued that life in rural areas was very hard and housing wasn’t always as cheap as MOEST thought. They should, therefore, be the one’s receiving more money as an incentive (hardship allowance) to stay on in places where the working and living conditions were much more difficult than in urban centres.

• Equality of educational outcome concerns from “parents”

The older “parents” believed that today’s Malawian school graduates know much less than they themselves did at any level of the school system. They explained that the practical subjects they learned in school meant that their school experience gave them knowledge which they could use at home to make their lives prosperous. This included the skills they learned in craft work because one could sell these crafts and make a living if one did not find paid employment. The older “parents”, however, agreed with the
younger participants that education today was primarily for getting paid work – jobs like teaching, hospital work, and clerical jobs in government and private industry. "Teachers going on strike, therefore, was a major contributing factor to our children not being able to find good jobs when they leave school", one participant observed. Here the participants seemed to have two measures for educational success – acquisition of knowledge that was useful for home life, and knowledge that was essential for securing paid employment.

A female “parent” asked me if I “recognized” her as having been to school. I replied that I did not think it was easy for one to say whether a person has been to school or not just by looking at him or her. She said, “Yes, it is. A woman who has been to school looks like you – clean clothes and has a job. Look at me. I went to school up to Standard 8 but ended up getting married because I could not get selected to secondary school. Now there is no difference between me and my friends who never went to school”.

One “parent” was more philosophical about the whole idea of equality of outcome. He said that people like to glorify the past forgetting that the past had its own challenges. He explained that equality of outcome is really dependent on many other things in a country, and at any one particular point in time, there will always be people who take advantage of situations to make things better for themselves. He explained that for example, one reason why Malawians demanded independence from the British was because they thought that if they were in charge of their own affairs, especially the education system; they would achieve equality of outcome for everyone more easily. Instead, he believed
that the leaders of that time were more motivated by personal interests and so could not and did not really strive for equality of outcome in education for everyone.

4.1.4.2 Interviews with key informants

I decided to interview some people I thought were knowledgeable about or interested in education issues in Malawi either because they have worked for MOEST at one point in their lives or are still working for MOEST, or their current work involves some coordination with MOEST programs. I had two main reasons for this decision: to find people to affirm that there was, indeed, a problem with our education system (or tell me it was all in my head), and if they had some ideas about “fixing” this problem. I had three questions that formed the basis of my discussions:

- What are we doing right in educating our children?
- What can we do better?
- What are we doing really wrong?

- What are we doing right in educating our children?

Most of the key-informants felt that:

- Most teachers are hard working and would like to remain teachers all their lives.
- Rural parents are still very interested in the education of their children. One of the key-informants gave the example of his own father who wanted his children to get educated because he had failed to get promoted to a clerical position himself because he could not read or write or speak English. He did not want this to happen to any of his children. The key-informants felt that parents who
themselves had never had a chance to go to school and, therefore, lacked the skills to get hired in positions that paid well, very much want their children to get a good education because that constituted a family investment for a better future.

- The key-informants thought that this means that schools have at least been able to maintain their image as symbols of a better future.

- **What can we do better?**

The key-informants had a lot to say about what needs improving if the education system is to stop turning into an illusion for many people. Some of the things that they said need immediate attention include the following:

- We need to strengthen the teaching of critical thinking, problem solving, and lifelong learning skills so that education has more uses than just securing paid employment.

- Primary school education should aim at helping learners develop permanent literacy and numeracy skills with the emphasis on understanding rather than just knowing things.

- Learners must be functionally literate by the time they leave primary school. The primary curriculum should, therefore, be “slim” – not everything needs to be in the curriculum. We should be teaching just the 3Rs, (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic), life skills, science, and health education. That way we might just be able to provide for primary education more adequately.

- Teachers and parents must support each other since children know that parents and teachers have the same wishes for them.
• Learners must develop self-confidence as part of their schooling experience.

• Teacher Training programs should be reviewed both in terms of content and duration. A 2 to 3 year program would ensure that subjects such as child development and educational psychology are given as much attention in the curriculum as English, math and science.

• What are we doing really wrong?

As for what is being done really badly or is not being done at all, key-informants had the following to say:

• Key-informants felt that the education system is inefficient especially in the use of resources. We keep on increasing enrolment without providing the resources to make learning happen. One key-informant noted that with the introduction of FPE, there were more underage children especially in Standards 1 and 2 because parents are now using normal schools as nursery schools. Head teachers have no power to enforce age restrictions or basic standards of hygiene and cleanliness because the parents argue that these do not apply to free education. They should be able to use schools as “drop-in centres” for their children in order for them to be able to attend to other equally important things in their lives.

• The type of learning offered in schools has very little practical use in the children’s daily lives.

• There are too frequent curriculum changes without involving teachers or orientating them to the changes.
There is lack of moral direction in many families. Most of the crimes in the villages are committed by school-age children who get protected by their families when they are caught. Unfortunately, most of the new teachers are also badly brought up and so do not act as good role models for their students – they should not be trusted with children. One key-informer suggested that in more affluent families, this is a result of “parenting by television” where the parents believe they are transmitting modern values to their children by allowing them to copy what they see on television. The children, therefore, have no concept of what *respect for elders* in the Malawian tradition means.

- Training of teachers should start from the colleges not from schools.
- Teacher promotions should be based on the performance of a teacher in the classroom not because they passed some interviews. A better mechanism should be found for identifying teachers who deserve to be promoted which should include asking students to make their own judgments. “Students are very good ‘inspectors’”, one key informant said.
- The best teachers should be allocated Standard 1 so they can lay a good foundation in English.
- Well-trained teachers should be given incentives to stay in the system.
4.2 Discussion of Findings

To discuss the findings above, I examined them in light of Serpell’s (1993) *Alternative Metaphors for Schooling* in order to see how these metaphors relate to the educational aspirations of Malawians, or the government’s reasons for adopting EFA goals: the belief that mass education leads to economic and social development through the development of human capital, and by providing individuals the skills they need to be successful in a modern society. I used Juma’s (2002) questions to help me in this exercise.

4.2.1 Effects of Colonization and Conceptions of Modernity and Westernization on the Way People Experience Education and Make Use of It in their Daily Lives

Young (1995) explains in his book *Colonial Desire* that colonialism’s main purpose was to “civilize” all people since civilization in the 1800s was seen as “the end-point in an historical view of the advancement of humanity” (p. 32). A “civilized” person was supposed to be cultured, a state achieved through education and training. In the case of Africa, Young quotes Pye (1783) who wrote a poem in which he said that Africans had no culture to boast about, and that they were unsocial and uninformed. In other words, Africans had to be like Westerners to be considered civilized. Education, therefore, especially mass education through public schools, became to be regarded as the means for civilizing and acculturating inferior races (both in Europe and overseas) into the ideological dynamics of European nations (Young, 1995, p. 51). The Christian (Protestant) missionaries in Malawi were very thorough in ensuring that Africans cast away their unsocial “savage and barbaric” (Young, 1995, p. 35) nature.
My own experience is that of growing up knowing nothing about my own culture. The Che_a people, who are the majority of Malawi’s inhabitants and the ethnic group to which I belong, had some cultural practices that the missionaries were sure would send us straight to hell if we did not stop them and ensure that our children never got to know about them. Most of these practices involved initiation rites which were the major way of educating the young about Che_a culture. This education was provided through membership to secret societies\textsuperscript{17} which the missionaries believed perpetuated evil and not good conduct as the people had believed. Secret societies were, therefore, banned in all villages under Christian missionary influence and anybody who was known to secretly continue to practice any of the rituals would be severely admonished by the church leaders. Since both my father’s and mother’s villages were in missionary-influence areas, I grew up not knowing what the secret society dancers looked like. I first saw the “spirits” as the dancers are commonly referred to, in 1964 during the first independence celebrations when the African leaders declared that there was no longer any need to fear the missionaries. Traditional dances and other rituals could be performed publicly if people wanted to do so.

Despite the African leaders declaring that God would never throw us into hell for practicing our traditional cultural practices, my parents did not think it was the right thing for them to send us for the traditional initiation ceremonies which they themselves had not undergone. Besides, the Churches were still controlled by white people or their

\textsuperscript{17} Among the Chewa, the secret society is called “Nyau” or “Gulewamkulu (big dance)”—“Gule” in short. The dances mark the end of whatever initiation activity was taking place and they are often performed at night. Membership is essentially for men. Women become members by association. Once a person is admitted, he becomes a life member since any act of renouncement is regarded with suspicion.
sympathizers who threatened to excommunicate any Christian who heeded the advice of the politicians and went back to "heathen" African traditions. But more important, my parents, who were themselves educated at mission schools and trained as teachers, believed the politicians were being retrogressive, that our traditions would never help people to become "modern" as measured by Western standards. So, although some of the people from the villages that were not under Christian influence started performing their ritual dances publicly by day, we were forbidden from going to watch the dances. And my grandparents never allowed such dances to be performed in their villages even after independence for fear of corrupting people who had already been "saved".

My data collection was done more than 30 years after the declaration of independence and one would think that by now Malawians might have a new appreciation for their pre-colonial values. But from Serpell's metaphors, readopting pre-colonial values would be regarded as being retrogressive since Western education (and Christianity) is supposed to be enlightening, providing an escape plan from poverty and a difficult rural existence. From what the participants in my study explained to me, Malawians specifically see education as a staircase for helping them to reach the top. The "top" was always described as employment by the participants – working for someone for pay. Office jobs were generally implied with some professional careers such as medicine, computing, education, and engineering being other possibilities, although many weren't sure that would be possible given the type of education that was being offered in the schools.
During an in-depth interview with a mother of eight children, she told me that she herself had left school early because during her time, she could not see any use for the kind of education she was getting. Her friends who persisted now have careers and hold important positions in the various organizations. She explained that when she met some of them at a women’s conference, she felt extremely embarrassed with herself, especially now that all her children were “nothing”. “Nothing? What do you mean by nothing?” I asked her. “Well, one works as a mail handler at one of the institutions around here. The other six could not get into secondary school and they are with me here doing nothing. The youngest is still in primary school. I hope she makes it into secondary school,” she explained. “But surely they help you in other ways,” I commented. “Yes, they do, but they did not have to go to school for that. My husband, here, was working in the city before we came back to the village. That is what I think education should enable you to do”. She continued to say that city life, which she equated to modernity because of the availability of clean running water, electricity, big hospitals, easy transportation systems, and other social services associated with Western lifestyle, was what education should be about in a person’s everyday life, not going back to live in the rural villages after school where life is about working the land at the mercy of unpredictable weather conditions. The famine, of course, provided a concrete example of how precarious dependency on subsistence farming could be.
4.2.2 Effects of Globalization and the Threat on Autonomy of National Educational Systems and the Sovereignty of the Nation-state

What I have learned so far in doing this study is that globalization seems to be another term for colonization. The dependency of poor countries like Malawi on donor aid means that they cannot make their own decisions concerning terms of trade or the use of donor funds. Young (1995) quotes Cecil Rhodes who is supposed to have said in 1895 that “...in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen, must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced…. The empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question” (p. 36).

In British Central Africa – Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Nyasaland (Malawi), and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) – colonialism was part of the Christian experience which Cecil Rhodes supported financially because of his vast interests in mining activities in Central and Southern Africa. And for me, as far back as I can remember, imported clothing and household items and consumer goods including foods such as wheat bread, margarine, tea, coffee, bottled beer, cigarettes, etc., have always been part of the things I took for granted as “must haves”. I didn’t know that we had been deliberately “programmed” to prefer these to our traditional foods, home brews and smokes.

Malawians like me today, do not know really what else we can have instead of the things that we have come to import as part of our daily existence. And this is also true with regard to the type of education our children should have. Gould (1993) notes that the Christian missionaries in Africa introduced an educational system which was a
synthesis of Christian religious practices and British middleclass educational practices. He explains that the content and style were similar to the liberal general education of the European middleclass where numeracy and literacy were more prized than the acquisition of technical or practical skills. Gould says that this is basically the kind of education that allows one entry into the civil service or other modern sector jobs.

Efforts to localize/Malawianize the school curriculum and educational goals to reflect pertinent issues in society have been made from time to time from as far back as 1965. Moyo (1992) says that at the time of independence in 1964, the purpose of education was declared as “to provide the number of people required to meet the staffing needs of government departments, industry and commerce, and to assist in the effort to stimulate the country’s economy, to raise people’s living standards, to eradicate illiteracy and to promote unity and cultural heritage” (p. 270-1). Over time, changes in educational goals have been directly influenced by government development plans.

Moyo says the 1973-80 Education Development Plan emphasized the need for issues in the school curriculum to reflect labour market needs. The 1973-80 Education Development Plan made note of labour market problems which were said to be a result of human resource shortages originating from low enrolment and graduation rates, especially at secondary school and university levels. The plan, therefore, called for the national school curriculum to have a greater relevance to socio-economic and environmental needs. It also called for more emphasis in the school curriculum on education for agricultural and rural development (pp. 271-4). The current educational
goals which are being revised through the PCAR process come from the 1985-1995 Development Plan, and as can be noted, they were formulated to reflect not only Malawi’s unique needs but also the needs of the international community even in the absence of adequate material and human resources. The result has been a high student dropout rate, and for those who persist, very little is learned to master the technical requirements for being productive in an industrialized society (Levin and Lockheed (1993).

As for national autonomy, I can’t see how Malawians can ever have national autonomy given that globalization robs poor countries of the freedom to make their own independent choices and decisions concerning things that really matter to them. Poor countries often find themselves forced to align with rich countries as a precondition for securing financial assistance. For example, the G8 countries are insisting on literacy and democracy as the major conditions for aid to developing countries. Fuller (1990) says that this turns schooling into a “modernizing project” where developing countries use schools as Western symbols to demonstrate that progress toward a modern society is being made. But Fuller also notes that use of schools to modernize people and their economies often fails because, as noted earlier, “Third World adaptations of the modern state are often plopped down within quite un-Western, pre-modern societies where they ignite a strong expectation of the society being transformed into a modern ‘Westernized’ society” (p. xix).
If modernity is the desired state, people in pre-modern communities have to find a way of attaining it – a route has to be found to get there. According to Serpell, schooling, therefore, becomes travel. Developing countries have to find the fastest route to becoming “modern”. The goals for education we choose should be those that would help us become urbanized quickly, strengthen our democratic institutions, and help us apply scientific and technological know-how to everyday life problems (Miles, 2001). In the case of Malawi, less than twenty percent of the population lives in what would be called urban centers or cities where they can claim to be experiencing some of the modern comforts of life (PRSP, 2002). The most important reason, therefore, why the Malawi education planners would feel obliged to maintain an educational system that is based on Western patterns is what Urch (1992) says about the importance of Western education to Malawians. Urch notes that Malawians have education as their main resource because the country has no known economically viable natural resources.

Malawi is land-locked with a high population density. It is said that Cecil Rhodes and other colonialists decided not to do mineral exploration in Malawi because they liked the beauty of the country (and possibly the large fresh-water lake) and so reserved it for holidaying and retirement homes. At the time of independence, the mines in South Africa and other former Southern African British colonies still relied on migrant labour from non-mining countries like Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Swaziland. I, therefore, think that it was not in the interest of the mining firms to invest in independent Malawi because this would have reduced the number of mine labourers available in the already established and lucrative mines in South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
The Malawi government’s most viable option for economic growth has, therefore, been investment in agriculture. The government encourages education for rural development and agricultural production although the type of education that Malawian children have always received and is emphasized in school curriculum is really geared for life away from the land; the type of education that makes it possible for one to seek employment opportunities even in other countries if necessary. Urch (1992), therefore, concludes that Malawians seek and value educational opportunities that they know would maximize their employment opportunities both at home and outside their borders, and that they know that employment opportunities are linked to the amount of education they have (pp. 133-4).

Urch (1992) was reporting on something that had also been true during Malawi’s colonial period and had been observed by Read (1955). Read reported that during her research among the Ngoni people, she noted that Malawians had great faith that education could lift them out of poverty, and that education could raise their standards of living, equip them with skills to use their natural resources, and to enable them to take their place in the modern world – education as transformation (production) and growth, according to Serpell’s metaphors. This, I think, makes Malawi and other developing countries consider matters of autonomy and nation-statehood secondary to the wish to be at par with other nations of the world. I think this will see countries like Malawi continue to model their schools and curriculum on the educational systems of their former colonial masters in pursuit of modern values as Harber (1989) observes. And as Miles (2001) says, globalization has also succeeded in making everybody (including us in developing
countries) believe that Western culture, values, and consumer goods are the ultimate measure of civilization. Miles notes that the *McDonaldization* process makes everybody want the same kind of food, cars, electronics, entertainment, clothing, etc. This reality leaves developing countries with very few choices as to what is appropriate education for our youths, especially when we are reminded that none of the rich countries ever achieved significant economic growth before attaining universal primary education (Hallak, 1990).

4.2.3 Effects of Poverty on Education

Torres (2001) asks if the problem is to improve education in order to alleviate poverty or rather to alleviate poverty in order to improve education and make education and learning possible. The participants in my study spent a lot of time explaining the problems they face daily just trying to exist. During the second data collection phase, their problems were compounded by the severe famine that had gripped the whole country because of drought and floods two years running. The “parents” admitted that often they sent their children to school without breakfast or snacks. They could not, therefore, persuade their children to go to school and stay there until school was over when they knew that the children were hungry. Clearly, poverty was a big problem and that until poverty was alleviated or eliminated, efforts to improve education and make education and learning possible would always be fraught with a multitude of problems.

While there might be no dispute about the importance of education to individuals and nations, education for many families in Malawi is a *struggle* that requires *amplifying*...
tools (Serpell’s sixth and seventh metaphors) if one is to experience the modern life at the end of it all. None of the parents or those participants who were still in school felt particularly triumphant or believed that they had the toolkit or the empowerment to venture into the world of paid work given the kind of education they had received. Most of the parents had some primary school education which was not enough to help them get good paid work. It was their wish that their children would do better than they had and get some secondary school and possibly college or university education so they could break the poverty cycle. However, they were not very optimistic of this happening because of the stringent secondary school selection system at Standard 8.

Given the G8 commitment to EFA, one would think the G8 countries would specifically want to address the causes of wastage in schools as a precondition for ensuring that EFA implementation is successful. One of the email contributors to the CIDA-sponsored discussion on education before the Kananskis summit wrote that if the G8 were serious about helping developing countries raise their literacy rates, they should come up with a plan that should include school feeding as well as compensate parents for allowing their children to go to school instead of helping them in home production activities. The final report, *Securing Progress for Africa and the World, 2002*, however, does not contain this contribution.

The Malawi primary school curriculum revision in 1989 took into account issues of poverty and unemployment by including goals that would help curriculum developers address these issues more specifically. Goals such as *occupational and entrepreneurship*
skills, practical skills, creative and resourcefulness skills, and scientific and technological development were aimed at making schooling experience responsive to labour market needs. The curriculum does not say specifically what subjects would be taught in order to achieve each of these goals, (or the other three – citizenship skills, ethical and socio-cultural skills, and economic development and environmental management skills). A study of the subjects being offered under this curriculum, however, gives one an idea as to how the curriculum is supposed to help address issues of poverty and unemployment. From Standard 3, both boys and girls are expected to have lessons in creative arts, home economics, music, and physical education, besides the more obvious lessons in languages (Chichewa or the appropriate mother tongue and English), mathematics, science, and health education, religious education, and social studies.

The former curricula (1968) had Home Economics taught to girls only from Standard 6 to 8 as an alternate subject to science and health education. Boys, on the other hand, had to study science and health education, and could also study craft and technology where this was offered. Music and physical education were time-tabled but the time for these subjects was often used for other things like make-up lessons in science, math, and English if the teacher thought s/he needed to catch up in these subjects. Some teachers also said that they did not teach subjects like home economics, music, religious education, and physical education because they had never studied them themselves, and they had no training or orientation in the teaching of these subjects when the revised curriculum was being implemented in the 1990/1 school year.
The revised curriculum replaced craft and technology in the previous curriculum with creative arts because at that time, there wasn't much technical equipment in the schools to make the teaching of craft and technology meaningful. Some primary schools in the 1970s and 80s had special metalwork and woodwork workshops built with World Bank funding but no technical teachers were sent to these schools. Eventually, most of equipment in these workshops were looted and are now used as ordinary classrooms. Creative arts was expected to be easier to implement because it does not need much specialized equipment. Also, it was thought that the concept of COPE (Community Oriented Primary Education) was going to be emphasized (Kishindo, 1992). The idea was that children would be taught the kind of crafts and art works that are well known in their locality even if the teachers did not know how to teach them. Where the teacher did not know how these art works were done, s/he would turn to the community for help. COPE assumes that the community in which the school is located would have some people who would be willing to teach their skills to children in school.

Teaching children local creative arts and crafts was supposed to help them to tap into the tourism market after school, especially for those students who had to go back and live in the villages because they could not make it into secondary school. Physical education and music were also supposed to enhance the chances of less academic students to make a career of music and sports. I asked the participants in my study what they thought about the learning of local crafts as a way of preparing oneself for the future. The older "parents" remembered learning how to make some commonly used household items at school such as making ropes which are commonly used for tying up goats to stop them
from destroying crops in the fields during the growing season. They also learned how to make hoe-handles, wooden spoons, and combs from bamboo. They insisted that these crafts have to be learned from the teacher in order to give them some “credibility”.

“Otherwise, why go to school to learn them if you can learn them right here in the village?” they asked me. I asked them how they would feel if they were asked by the head-teacher of their local school to teach the children some of these skills. Some felt that they would not know how to do it. Those who felt they could do it asked me if that meant being paid since this would mean their having to spend time in the school instead of doing their own work.

In general, “parents” felt that there was nothing wrong in teaching children how to make local crafts. They just wondered if it was realistic to expect anybody to make a living making and selling local crafts these days given that there are so many substitutes in the shops that cost much less than one would have to charge for those crafts to make a decent living. For example, one can buy synthetic/plastic factory-produced ropes, combs, baskets, and other items in various sizes and shapes for very little money. One older “parents” argued that he was never interested in craft work when he was in school and did not remember finishing anything, not even twisting a rope which was supposed to have been one of the easiest items to make. He never failed his examinations even when he had zeros for his craft work. He asked if this means that this time students would be graded to give them some encouragement to learn these crafts. I explained that the situation was the same as in his days. Creative arts, home economics, music, and physical education are non-examination subjects. Teachers, therefore, do not feel guilty
using time for creative arts, home economics, music, religious education, and physical education to give extra lessons in English, math, science, and social studies which their students have to pass in order to be selected for secondary school.

Technology is something that MOEST is now emphasizing, especially at the secondary school level because it is what donors are most interested in. The World Bank (2000), for example, believes that globalization and information technology offer enormous opportunity for Africa to leapfrog stages of development (p. x). The World Bank (1999) sees the rapid spread of democracy, technological innovations, emergence of new market economies, and changing public/private roles as a legitimate reason for countries to want to ensure that their people are highly educated and skilled, and individuals have the skills and information to compete and thrive in the global village. It can be said, therefore, that even when there is a genuine effort to localize the curriculum and make learning compatible with the daily realities of local people, economic pressures emanating from the global village will always make educational planners come up with curricula that do not deviate too much from what our Western donors would be willing to fund. For example, although the 1989 curriculum emphasized practical subjects like creative arts, home economics, music, religious education, and physical education, the World Bank refused to fund them because it was not their policy to include these subjects (WB, 2001). The World Bank only funded languages (Chichewa and English), mathematics, science and health education, and social studies because they regarded these subjects as directly related to economic development. The World Bank (2001) publication *A chance to Learn: Knowledge and Finance for Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* explains that this
selective funding for educational programs was World Bank policy for all developing countries.

Poverty, both local and at the national level, is, therefore, the biggest problem in any attempts to provide an education that truly addresses the everyday needs of most people in Malawi because the Malawi government would find it almost impossible to find donors to fund such a curriculum. As Orjiako, (2001) notes, rich countries do not give aid to poor countries just because they are benevolent. Rich countries and donor organizations regard development aid as "good business" because they can set the conditions for such aid. I do not think that donors can set binding conditions for an education system they do not understand. And because we have also come to believe that education is the single most important key to development and to poverty alleviation, we do not give ourselves the permission to make our educational systems serve our needs for fear that would jeopardize our children's chances to acquire the skills they need to find jobs anywhere in the world.

4.2.4 National goals for Educational and the Aspirations of Malawians

During in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, I explained to "parents" what the government says are the goals of education. The syllabuses do not define what each of the seven skills means specifically. My explanation, therefore, reflected my own understanding of these skills. I asked "parents" if any of these goals resonated with their own ideas about education and their own life experiences.
4.2.4.1 Citizenship skills

Most "parents" felt that schools were doing a bad job of teaching children citizenship skills especially when the government encourages discrimination in schools through the use of languages. For thirty years, Malawian schools taught only two languages – Chichewa as the national language, and English as the official business language. But as part of the implementation process of the FPE, MOEST allowed other local languages to be used for instructions in Standards 1-4 in areas where Chichewa is not a dominant language (MOEST/UNICEF, 1998). "Parents" argued that the use of Chichewa and English only in schools helped to unify the people of Malawi. The Malawi nation is made up of people from many different ethnic groups with their own languages. They were forced to become one nation because of the artificial borders that had been created during the "scramble for Africa" in the 1880s (Young, 1995). After thirty years of teaching only Chichewa and English in school, most people could go to any part of the country and be able to communicate through Chichewa or English. They feared that if children no longer have to learn Chichewa in Standard 1-418, the non-Chichewa speakers would be disadvantaged when they move to the large cities to look for jobs because in the big cities, people communicate mostly through English or Chichewa.

Teachers felt that allowing more than one local language to be used for instruction in schools affected them in terms of where they could work. With only two required languages, teachers could teach anywhere in Malawi but if children have to be taught in

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18 The new language policy recommends that Chichewa be taught as a subject in Standards 1-4 in areas where the local language is not Chichewa, and that the local language be used as a medium of instruction. Participants felt that teaching Chichewa as a subject and not using it for instruction was not enough for non-Chichewa speakers to learn it quickly and use it for communication outside their local area.
their mother tongue, it means that teachers who were in areas where they do not speak the mother tongue would have to leave or teach only Standards 5-6 where English is the main language of instruction. What made things even more difficult for them was that by the time I was visiting the schools, MOEST had still not translated the instructional materials into the other languages that could be used for instruction. So, even if a teacher was in a school located in an area which uses a language other than Chiche_a but one which the teacher knows well enough to use for instruction, s/he would have to make his/her own translations of the instructional materials in order to teach in the local language.

Teachers also felt that FPE was bad for citizenship skills because the students and their parents did not think the schools were providing good education now that they did not have to pay for it. They complained that there was so much truancy in many classes because students and their parents did not feel that they were incurring any loses (financially) by skipping classes. The teachers explained that they never experienced such high absenteeism and dropout during the time students had to pay for their education because only those who valued education paid for it and ensured that they got their money’s worth.

One teacher explained that each day during the five school days each week, half of the children would have missed a class the day before and would most likely not be in class the following day. This forces teachers to go over the same material several times each week in order to make some progress. The repetitions soon become boring to those children who come to school daily, and they too, soon start coming to school irregularly.
Some of the "parents" agreed with the teachers' analysis of the problem and told me that they had to pull their children out of the government FPE program and put them in private schools because they felt that the attitude of the children who did not want to be in school was affecting the performance of their children whom they wanted to do well in school.

From the donor perspective, (WB and G8 literature documents) citizenship skills are really about being able to understand the democratic process. They say that only when people can read and write can they be able to participate fully in democratic processes such as voting which are good for good governance. The donor community emphasise good governance as necessary for creating a good investment climate and somehow, they believe that only literate people would know how to make democratic choices. Most of the "parents" in this study were either illiterate or could barely read and write and yet their analysis of how government decisions were affecting their daily lives was just as good as what I get when I discuss these issues with my highly educated friends. After all, there are voting mechanisms which do not need one to be literate to understand how they work.

4.2.4.2 Ethical and socio-cultural skills

I could not really get the "parents" to separate socio-cultural skills from citizenship skills. The problem was that I have difficulties in understanding citizenship skills in terms of democratic processes as elaborated in the literature. My definition of citizenship skills tended to embrace the things I had learned myself about how to be a good citizen which
included knowing and valuing your own culture. I did not, therefore, press on the discussion on socio-cultural skills. I just allowed “parents” to discuss what they understood better.

“Parents” thought they understood what ethical skills were. They understood ethical skills to mean decisions about right and wrong. The “parents” were quick to point out who was responsible for their children not getting selected to secondary school. They blamed the untrained teachers, MOEST, and the examination system: the untrained teachers for having a laissez-faire attitude toward their work; MOEST for not adequately training the teachers and for not providing adequate teaching and learning materials in the schools; the examination system for forcing too many children to repeat Standard 8 because too many “fail”\(^\text{19}\) national examinations.

“Parents” also claimed that their children complain that teachers are often rude to them in school – the teachers tell students that the government was not paying them enough and so they did not see why they should bother with them. (One of the reasons teachers were on strike was to force MOEST to pay them the wage increase the president had declared he would make sure they get). Some of the older “parents” who had been to school themselves found this attitude very disturbing. They explained that it was the responsibility of both teachers and parents to teach children ethical values that would help children develop into responsible citizens. One “parent” explained that during her

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\(^{19}\) The fact of the mater is that selection depends on the number of available places in Form 1 rather than on whether a student passed the exam or not. In 1998, MOEST increased Form 1 places by creating Community Day Secondary Schools. This saw the number of Form 1 places increase from 10 percent to 20 percent of students who took the Standard 8 national examinations (Kadzamira & Rose, 2003).
days, if a child came home and complained that s/he had been punished at school, parents reinforced the punishment to make sure that the child understood that bad behaviour was not going to be tolerated even at home. She regretted that she would never reinforce a teacher’s punishment herself because she never agrees with some of the reasons why children get punished in school these days.

Teachers mostly complained that students and their parents do not respect them — students do not see them as having any moral authority or as holding the kind of ethical values that they can pass on to them. I think this is the result of the separation of church and state. Many schools are no longer controlled by churches and many more never had church control in the first place. During my time as a student, and the first few years as a teacher, teachers were expected to be models of good behaviour and to teach their students what was wrong and what was right based on Bible teachings and sometimes as specially interpreted by the church that controlled the school the teachers were in. Teachers are now government employees (except those teaching in private schools) and they are unionized. They insist on enjoying the same rights as other government workers which must include being judged by the same moral standards as everyone else. Teachers, therefore, demand the right to socialize with whoever they want (like visiting the local pub as often as they want), and have more relaxed dress and behaviour codes as opposed to the codes that were prescribed when schools were under Christian influence. The result has been that teachers smoke and get drunk openly (even if they do not come to class drunk or smoke in class), divorce or have common-law marriages, and often dress more slovenly than some parents would like to see. The question is, therefore,
"whose standards are we talking about here?" I was told by my colleagues at the MIE that curriculum specialists in religious education had developed a moral education curriculum which was being contested by the Moslem clerics because they claimed they were not included in its development.

Teachers also complained that they had lost their moral authority with the advent of the FPE because many parents think that they are all untrained and so they do not know that much. The other reason teachers felt had contributed to the loss of their moral authority over students was the fact that many of the students have parents who have been to school and think they know what teaching is about. Their authority is often contested and in urban areas, it was not uncommon to hear of a parent dragging a teacher to court over something that would have been thought of as “normal” school practice in the past. This includes corporal punishment which is now banned in Malawian schools.

4.2.4.3 Economic development and environmental management skills

The economy of Malawi is agro-based. Most of our local earnings as well as international trade come from agricultural produce. Crops such as tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, tea, and coffee are the main income generators both at home and on international markets. The 1973-80 Education Development Plan made note of this fact when it called for a national school curriculum that had more emphasis on education for agricultural and rural development (Moyo, 1992). During the time of my data collection, however, many of the factories that were processing agricultural produce such as tobacco, cotton, and making soap, and cooking oil from cotton seed were closing down. They all
cited that the cost of making cigarettes, cloth, soap, and oil using local produce had become very high because the processes required other ingredients that had to be imported from overseas. Imports are very expensive for Malawi because it is a landlocked country. The mother companies of the Malawi factories, therefore, had decided that it was cheaper to use Malawi as a marketing outlet for their finished products manufactured in neighbouring countries where production costs were much lower. Companies like British American Tobacco (BAT) and Lever Brothers closed their manufacturing units in Malawi, leaving their distribution units which now sell the same products but produced in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Malawi also has to make its education and economic decisions as part of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). This includes economic initiatives and the development of other natural resources such as fishing, animal husbandry, mining, forestry, etc., which have to be done with the cooperation of all the other countries in the region. The pressure for an educational system that meets the needs of the global market, therefore, is not just because we are not capable of recognizing what the majority of Malawians need but it is because we are trying to ensure our survival under very difficult economic conditions. And this has to be done even if our educational system is ill-equipped for the purpose.

While "parents" had very little to add to their belief that education has to translate into jobs, environmental management, however, generated very heated debates. Much of the area in which I was collecting the data lies at the foot of the biggest mountain (Zomba
Mountain) in the area, and below it is a lake (Lake Chirwa). There are several rivers that run into the lake and with continuous cultivation, the area has many deep gullies and the soil has degenerated seriously over the years. The older “parents” explained that the colonial government tried to protect the land by introducing stringent land use measures which many people found difficult to implement. They explained that a government officer used to tour the villages to make sure that the areas around the houses were covered by kapinga and that the fields had contour bunds21 to break the speed of rain water as it ran down from the mountain to the lake. I asked where they got enough kapinga to plant around every house. They explained that the government had “multiplying stations” and government officers brought the grass to the villages and distributed it to those who needed it. They explained that failure to plant this grass and maintain it or to make the big contour bunds in the fields earned people fines or prison sentences. This, they told me, was one of the big issues in the fight against British rule.

I asked them why they hated planting the grass and making the contour bunds since these were supposed to be good for them. They agreed that looking back, the ideas were good but the colonial government made these activities paramount in their lives, and no excuse was good enough to the government officers if they found anyone who had not planted the grass or made the bunds and ridges. And since many people did not have money to pay the fines, it meant being sent to prison for three to six months. Meanwhile, the rain season would come and go which meant that the people in prison missed the chance to grow their crops for that year.

20 Kapinga is a durable fast-multiplying short grass that is used to cover lawns to keep them green and free from dust.
21 Contour bunds are big ridges that run across the slope to control the flow of rain water across the field. They are meant to reduce soil erosion and encourage more water to sink when it rains.
One “parent” explained that the contour bunds were very difficult to make with a hoe because they were supposed to be very big – three feet wide, three feet high and running all across the field. And depending on the size of the field, one could be required to make as many as three to six contour bunds. “This was far too hard work for older people, but even for the younger ones, this work required too much time and energy – time and energy one needed for growing the actual crops, or to repair the houses before the rains. It did not matter, either, if you were not able to do the work because of illness. You still got sent to prison if you could not pay the fine. This was why it was so easy for Malawian politicians to mobilize people against colonial rule around issues of agriculture. Unfortunately, the Malawian politicians could not reinforce the soil conservation measures after independence since that was what they claimed was bad about colonial rule. So, now you can see how badly eroded our area is”, he concluded.

Other elders commented that it would be good if the current educational system brought back some of the village-based educational programs instead of the present understanding that one has to be enrolled in school in order to get some education.

“Parents”’ opinions concerning occupational and entrepreneurship skills, practical skills, creative and resourcefulness skills, and scientific and technological development skills have been included in various sections of this report. Generally, I sensed that there was very little the “parents” believed could be done meaningfully outside government if you as an individual or a community did not have the resources. In short, they concurred with Farrell (1992) that those who experienced upward social
and/or economic mobility were often those who already had some resources to help them get educated while the poor, whether from birth or through other circumstances, remained poor as adults especially if there was no one in their family to give them a "push".
CHAPTER 5
PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

My investigations in this study led me to discover that the educational endeavour in Malawi is propelled by the human capital and modernization theories which are behind the adoption of mass education programs in many developing countries like Malawi. Jones (1992) says that education systems that are based on the belief in human capital theory show a strong faith in the power of human knowledge, skill, and experience to transform individuals and society (p. 233). He explains that the human capital theory was developed as an attempt to explain the high rates of post-war economic growth that was being experienced in the USA and Western Europe during the industrial revolution. It, therefore, became the justification for rapid expansion of public education systems since investing in human capital and developing human resources was seen as legitimate pathways to economic and social development (Jones, 1992, p. 36).

Developed countries and the World Bank and IMF are now the major players in promoting education for human capital development because of their financial power and influence. These countries and institutions see education as a prerequisite to modernization and Jones thinks that this is making schools, their teachers, and the curriculum in all countries to become more alike along the lines that are implied by modernization. He observes, however, that questions of human dignity, diversity, equity, and freedom are neglected instead of making them go together with the desire to fulfil tangible material needs that are so central to the pursuit of happiness and well-being. My
metaphor for this state of affairs in education is that of driving a car with shift gears where the operator only uses the first and second gears – education for economic development and modernization and ignores the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth gears – education that promotes human dignity, diversity, equity, and freedom.

Below, I summarize some of my major reflections on education for modernization and the development of human capital, basing my reflections on the concept of Education for All (EFA) which in Malawi was implemented at the primary school level as Free Primary Education (FPE) because I think our education is doing exactly this: operating on two or less gears more powerful gears as we scramble for a place in the global village.

5.1 Education for Developing Human Capital

As a country heavily dependent on small-scale subsistence agricultural activities, both the colonial government and the first African government in 1964 did not consider the provision of educational services to all Malawians a priority. If an individual wanted to have some education through schooling or other means, that was considered a private matter which rarely got the support of the government. The government got directly involved in the education of individuals mostly when it required workers with specific skills needed to maintain government functions. And since these skills often involved post-secondary education and training, the government became considerably involved in post-secondary education that included university education, and job and professional training in medical services, education, and agricultural extension. Government’s
involvement in education and training increased considerably after 1964 when many white civil servants left the country after Malawi became independent from Britain.

During the colonial period, the missionaries (with the support of the colonial government) decided what was worthwhile and desirable knowledge to be taught in schools, especially if it was considered most effective in civilizing and acculturating the “inferior races” (Young, 1995). The form and means for teaching this knowledge was radically different from what the native people knew. This probably is the major reason why colonized people developed an inferiority complex for things that had always been acceptable in their own culture before colonization and the advent of Christian missionaries. So, while Malawians did not have to fear spiritual damnation after independence, the shame of going back to an “inferior culture” was enough to keep us faithful to our colonial teachings. We could not, therefore, make radical changes to our educational system especially because the colonial system worked better in terms of enabling the Malawi nation to participate in matters beyond her borders like in international trade and membership to international organizations such as the United Nations Organization (UNO) and the Organization for African Unity (OAU). Malawian leaders also recognized that there was a need for a system of government that could ensure national cohesion since the new Malawi was made up of many different ethnic groups which had their own forms of governments.

Since very few people, if any, question the belief that education is the surest way to transform national economies and people’s lives, the adoption of EFA principles
(translated as FPE in Malawi) seemed like the most prudent thing to do in 1994. Malawians do believe that education is transformative and that it does lead to some personal growth (intellectually as well as in terms of practical skills). They also know because they have seen it happen that education is a staircase (Serpell, 1993) that has helped many people to rise to positions they would never have risen to through traditional structures had they not been to school. This study, however, shows that not too many people in Malawi are experiencing these results from their educational experiences. Most end up being labeled “failures” by their school experiences because of the way national examinations are used to restrict students from “flooding” the next level of the educational system.

The Malawi education system is becoming an example of a system that unintentionally, perhaps, creates a credential society (Bills, 2003; Brown & Lauder, 1997) as reflected by “parents” remarks in this study who insisted that it is the “papers” that their children need from school so they can find jobs. Other characteristics of the job-seeker such as personal integrity or development of human dignity, diversity, equity and freedom were not mentioned. It was to be expected, therefore, that “parents” in this study felt that a person should really think of himself or herself being educated if that education can help him or her to get and retain a paid job – “this is what we mean when we say that someone is successful in life”, they told me. If education did not enable a person to get a paid job, that person was as good as not educated because “one does not need to go to school to be successful in a rural village”, they added. Education for personal development and enjoyment, for example, to be able to read papers for information and
novels for pleasure, was never mentioned either, and probably it would not make sense if suggested since there are hardly any such reading materials in many homes.

5.2 Education and Development

When the Malawi government says that education is the *centerpiece* for economic development, one is meant to understand development in terms of Western culture, values, and consumer goods and practices which have now become the ultimate measure of civilization – a measure of how *Macdonaldized* you are (Miles, 2001). Given the huge difference in incomes between developed and developing countries, one cannot stop to wonder why we should be aiming at this type of development since incomes are a very important input in the development and success of education, both at individual and national levels. Shouldn’t it be possible to just get from the West whatever knowledge we need that helps us make our lives better without aiming at transforming our societies to become like Western societies? For example, we know that the computer and information industry is big business in the West as both the hardware and software get updated constantly, forcing consumers to acquire new knowledge and equipment almost on a yearly basis. In order to print this thesis, I took my 3-year old computer to a repair shop because the CD drive could no longer accept CDs. I was told that I was better off with a new computer because the computer I was asking them to repair was so outdated that there were no spare parts that were compatible with it. I told them that I had spent close to CNS$2000 for that computer three years ago and now they were telling me that I needed another $2000 to complete my work. “Yes, ma’am, if you really want a good deal
because these new computers…” They continued to explain things I didn’t quite understand, things I felt I did not need.

In Malawi we do not have the kind of money that would enable us to keep pace with such rapid changes. Shouldn’t our education system concentrate on developing creativity (Educational Goal 6: Creative and resourcefulness skills) so that we should just be adapting Western technologies to make them work for us instead of concentrating on teaching our students math and science for university entrance and the needs of the global market? Perhaps the main reason this will never be the case is that given by Professor Stephen Amenyaw from Simon Fraser University (SFU) in his lecture on sustainable community economic development titled No easy choices: Renewing hope in African Development.22 Professor Amenyaw explained that there exists a phenomenon called the “development industry” which requires poor countries to “modernize” according to standards defined by the West so as to increase the number of consumers for Western markets. Poor countries get persuaded to believe that they need growth first in order to generate enough income for redistribution later. This is what has seen poor countries like Malawi build concrete high rise buildings that require air conditioning and elevators when the weather and electricity supply clearly indicate this is a bad idea. Professor Amenyaw added that maintenance of these buildings and all the gadgets that get installed in them means continuous import of expensive Western technologies that only serve to deplete scarce resources that are needed for essential services such as education and healthcare. They do not make growth happen. Instead, poor countries pay the West huge

22 Professor Amenyaw gave this lecture on January 29, 2004, at UBC as part of the 2nd Annual Africa Awareness Week activities.
sums of money for goods and services that only a few “educated” elites value even when they do not make a difference in many people’s lives.

Professor Amenyaw suggests that since so many of these technologies are already in developing countries while they have already become obsolete in the countries from where they originated – things like manual type-writers, older computer models, cars, bicycles, radios, television sets, etc., a good education system for developing countries would be one that allows students to explore ways of making these equipment to continue to work long after the West has stopped making spare parts for them. I personally understood what the professor was saying because this is how most of us keep our cars and most of our electrical equipment working in Malawi. The people who maintain them do not always have formal training in the maintenance of these things. They often gain their knowledge from observing or working with someone who may have had formal training in maintaining such equipment. Formalizing this type of education would help create standards that would increase the safety of such “remodeled” gadgets. National examination standards would not have to be based on literacy and numeracy skills but on how well a person understands how a particular gadget works and if the person can maintain and ensure that it does not pose any danger to the user. I think this is what the key-informants are implying when they say that education should teach more critical thinking and problem solving skills and emphasize understanding rather than just knowing things.
5.3 Education for Poverty Alleviation

Reflecting on Torres’s (2001b) question – whether the problem is to improve education in order to alleviate poverty or rather to alleviate poverty in order to improve education so as to make education and learning possible – I think education planners in developing countries (with or without the support of their financial backers) need to seriously find an appropriate answer to this question. For example, the implementation of FPE in Malawi assumed that even a small “dose” of education for everyone would go a long way toward alleviating and, perhaps, completely eradicate our poverty. So, all the government needed to do was to remove the restrictions to access to education and not worry too much about the quality of the accessible education. Research, however, shows that access was not the only limiting factor to children’s participation in education. Poverty and hunger were also important factors that were not taken into account when FPE was being conceived and implemented. Professor Amenyaw calls the highlighting of only one factor in solving complex social and economic problems a “one-strand” development strategy – only one aspect of the problem is addressed instead of addressing all the factors that are crucial in ensuring that the solution is sustainable. In Malawi, the absence of a social welfare system and school feeding programs are some very obvious contributing factors to non-enrollment and school dropout. Kadzamira and Rose (2003) explain that even with the full knowledge of the economic advantages of schooling, families do not see schooling as “an immediate survival strategy” (p. 502). They add that during the “hunger months”23 children often go to school hungry which forces them to drop out.

23 Kadzamira and Rose (2003, p. 513) say that December-February are considered hunger months in Malawi because many families have very little food this time of the year.
5.3.1 Making Education/Learning Happen

Given the importance of teachers in an educational system that has very few other instructional resources, the Malawian school system seems to be losing perspective on this one very important resource, the teacher. The belief that schools can be flooded with untrained and underqualified teachers with very little support structures for them to do their work satisfactorily and still expect the same quality of educational outcomes must have been ill-advised. Donors claim that the Malawi government has not kept its part of the bargain – that it would provide a certain percentage of the money required to make MIITEP work. One would have thought that it was obvious at the outset that this was impossible for a country whose daily preoccupation is to find the money to pay off debts to lending institutions in order to secure more loans. We are now faced with a situation where educational hopes of many Malawians were raised but they cannot really be fulfilled because not much learning is taking place in schools even if schools are now more readily accessible.

Other major problems impacting on education and learning are the health status of teachers with regard to the AIDS/HIV pandemic, low pay for teachers, the ministry’s delay in appointing newly qualified teachers, and paying on time the teachers that are already in the schools. Country studies on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS show that teachers are just as badly affected as other social groups. This is an area that needs further investigation by MOEST to determine the exact loss of teachers due to AIDS/HIV. Competitively low pay for teachers, the ministry’s delay in appointing newly qualified teachers, and paying teachers seemed probably the major problem that lead to
even greater loss of teachers according to my discussion with teachers. The government keeps defending itself by saying that the education sector is just too big and uses up too much of its resources. Many teachers who have no other sources of income find these delays unacceptable and so do not join the government teaching service upon the completion of their teacher education programs, or leave the system at their earliest opportunity. This makes one wonder why we still want to pursue FPE/EFA ideals. Is it possible that we really don’t want to admit that EFA is not working for us? Admitting to this should not really be a problem because Farrell (1992) says that even the World Bank now admits that improving educational access and survival may have to be sacrificed in order to restore at least minimal levels of learning output from educational systems because neither individuals nor society benefit from increasingly equal access to and survival through a schooling system in which students learn less and less (p. 167).

It is no secret that many newly qualified teachers decide not to work for MOEST, and for teachers who are already in government service, many retire early or just leave to work for organizations that can assure them of timely pay. For such teachers (as is true even of non-teachers), education may have been seen largely as an investment – to alleviate poverty by securing a job at the end of the process. My observation is that families often do both – they use education to alleviate poverty, and alleviate poverty in order to make education happen. Poor families often send one or two children to school while the rest of the family work to support the schooling of that child or those children. The idea is that when that child or those children find jobs after their schooling, they will support the
education of their younger siblings as well as contribute to the improvement of the rest of their family members.

5.3.2 Teachers and the School Curriculum

The fact that teachers find it hard to teach some of the things they are required to teach means that children are not benefiting much from the school curriculum even if it could be rated as one of the best in developing countries. The curriculum now in use was supposed to serve the diverse needs of children. It was supposed to give children a very strong foundation in the traditional academic subjects (English, math, science, social studies), as well as offer them the chance to develop creative skills in art, music, and other practical subjects. Teachers gave two main reasons why they cannot implement the curriculum fully in their classes: either they did not learn the material during their own time in school and/or during the special orientation to the revised curriculum, or they just were not competent in those curriculum areas. This second point was mostly true of those teachers who were originally hired as temporary untrained teachers because most were actually “failures” from the standpoint of Malawi’s national examinations. I suppose that if they hadn’t failed their Form 4 examinations, they would probably never have become teachers. And yet our curricular innovations always assume that they will be implemented under optimum conditions. Again, this is simply a reflection of the donor-driven nature of our curricular innovations since if we change the conditions to suit our own, our evaluation results will look “horribly wrong” as was noted by ADEA (2001) stocktaking review of education in Africa. This makes it difficult to meet the challenge to transform an elite educational system meant for a few lucky Africans into a mass
education system for all, and to maintain standards on a very tight budget as suggested by the Global Campaign for Education (2002).

5.4 The Importance of Educating Women and Girls

The emphasis on the education of women and girls is based on the results of many research studies the world over, especially in the fields of agriculture, health, and population that summarize the benefits of educating women in this well-known saying, “when you educate a man, you educate an individual, when you educate a woman, you educate the whole nation”. It was, perhaps, this understanding of the importance of educating women that saw MOEST launch the GABLE project in 1992 under the sponsorship of the USAID. Just like FPE, GABLE does not seem to have had any more remarkable successes in increasing the number of girls entering and completing secondary school. My suspicion is that the GABLE project was launched based on the misconception I hear so often in this country (Canada) that African patriarchy deliberately sabotage the educational efforts of women. (Professor Amenyaw was asked a similar question – he was asked for his solution to the problem of African parents not wanting their girls to go to school.)

While there is no question that fewer girls and women attain educational levels that are at par with their male counterparts, the explanation cannot wholly rely on the relationship between men and women. Other factors that could have just as much an impact on the education of girls should be investigated. It may be true that some African parents think that educating girls is a waste of resources but it is also true that not all African men think
like that and that women who really want an education do find the means to get educated as Kiluva-Ndunda’s (2001) study of women’s agency and educational policy in Kenya shows. My own grandfather took personal responsibility for the education of my mother by walking her all the 20 miles or so to school every beginning of term and going back to walk her back home at the end of each term. My mother tells me that there were times the river they had to cross was full and her father had to lift her on his shoulders to cross the river even when she was a big girl (15-17 years old).

For really poor families, supporting the education of boys rather than that of girls is a survival strategy; an answer to Torres’s question – alleviating poverty so as to make education and learning possible. Patriarchy becomes important here not because it stops girls from attending school but because it subjects wives to their husbands. Marriage and child bearing and rearing are still valued highly in the Malawian society. This makes the returns to investment of a girl’s education uncertain since no one can tell whether the girl’s husband will allow her control over her own earnings, or if he would be willing to extend his help to his wife’s family. On the other hand, boys are raised to understand that they have full responsibility for their sisters and their children, besides taking care of their own families. In the old days, men in my tribe were not even expected to care for their own children as their brothers’-in-law were the ones directly responsible for their married sisters and their children. So, in a household where resources are limited, it makes economic sense to invest those resources in the boys rather than in the girls.
As a woman, a wife, and a mother myself, I personally know how women's roles put heavy restrictions on my ability to participate in activities (including education) outside the home. I, therefore, think that the priority put on marriage and child bearing and rearing is a major factor that contributes to the low participation of women and girls in education and not the mere absence of fees. It is extremely difficult for girls to continue with their education after puberty in a country that does not provided contraceptive technologies for free. So even for families that can afford to support all their children's schooling, many girls drop out of school because of adolescent pregnancy (Kishindo, 1991). And for those girls who do complete secondary school or university, the pressure to get married soon after is always great. This means that work, wifehood, and motherhood take precedence over education for many years while for males, these roles do not seem to require of them as much time and responsibility as they do of women – I suppose men's spousal and parental roles are not as elaborate as those of women, which leads to many men abandoning them at will thus increasing further women's responsibilities.

The combination of poverty and lack of free contraceptive technologies for school girls (as opposed to families deliberately keeping girls out of school) have been beautifully recorded in some folk songs like the one played by a local band, the Namakhwa Brothers' Band:
This song seems to explain why there are very few girls in upper primary and secondary school levels in Malawi. The Malawi Educational Statistics\textsuperscript{24} has always shown that the number of girls in the first 3-4 classes of school often exceeds that of boys. Girls begin to disappear from school in grades 5-8 mainly because they are old enough at this age to help their mothers with the care of younger children, food production duties, and the care of the sick. With the AIDS pandemic, girls often have to take over the running of their homes when the mother is afflicted or she needs to take care of another family member full-time. Sometimes, girls begin school very late because of the same reasons (see Figure 3-3) and by the time they get to Standard 5, they find themselves “too big” for their classes which embarrasses them and makes them leave school.

The song shares the blame for the low participation of girls in education between the school and the home. It says that families’ reliance on sons-in-law as providers is the main reason parents encourage their daughters to leave school and get married. Sons-in-law increase the number of providers (besides their customary responsibility to their own

\textsuperscript{24} This is a MOEST yearly publication which gives statistical information on enrollment, teacher and instructional materials supply and other facts that may be of interest to researchers, donors to education, and others.
sisters, nieces and nephews). The parents, on the other hand, blame the school. They say that it is the school that is to blame; the school makes the girls promiscuous and so girls should not stay in school beyond Standard 7. Instead they should avoid the possibility of becoming unmarried mothers by getting married and providing their families with sons-in-law who can then help provide for their families.

The GABLE project did try to address the problem of adolescent pregnancy by requiring MOEST to change the school policy that excluded permanently from school girls who became pregnant while still in school. Girls can now go back to school after their baby is born and is at least a year old. Again, with no free contraceptives available, the girls can dropout from school again because of another pregnancy which often means never going back to school again. The GABLE project seems to have been a good example of a “one strand” solution to a problem.

5.5 Education for Leadership

If Lowe (1997) is right that the transformations which have revolutionized the world and national economies have taken place outside formal educational systems, then the emphasis that is put on EFA may be misplaced. This is what I felt watching the movie “Seven Years in Tibet” (Columbia/Tristar, 1997). In this movie, the Tibetans have bits and pieces of Western knowledge, artifacts, and equipment which they do not understand how they really work. The leader of the Tibetans, the Dalai Lama, asks Heinrich Harrer, the main actor in this movie, to teach him something about Western culture and knowledge, and build a movie theatre for his people. While Heinrich Harrer may have
had a good knowledge of “Paris, molotov cocktails, and Jack the Ripper”, things that the
Dalai Lama said he wanted to know, Harrer’s knowledge about building the movie
cinema seems limited, and his lack of knowledge of the Tibetan culture proves a real
handicap. But the Dalai Lama advises him to use his “cleverness” to find solutions to
the problems he is encountering in getting the cinema built. In the end, with Harrer’s
leadership, the Tibetans build the cinema with whatever resources they could find in their
environment. The Tibetans did not necessarily have to learn all the math or read and
write in English in order to understand the architectural design of the cinema theatre,
neither did Harrer have to be a Buddhist scholar to be able to understand the Tibetan
culture and spirituality in order to help the Tibetans realize their dreams.

While it is obvious that Harrer had a lot of school-based knowledge that the Dalai Lama
and his people admired, I think what was really useful for him in settling among the
Tibetans was his ability to lead the Tibetans in finding solutions to their everyday
practical problems and the satisfaction of their wants and needs using whatever resources
were available in their environment. They were able to get an old car started so the Dalai
Lama could learn to “drive”, old radios were repaired so they could learn what was
happening in the wider world, and, of course, they built the movie theatre which must
have brought them a great sense of accomplishment. I think if Malawian children went
back to their communities after school as leaders and not failures, it would be a big step
in making education truly a centerpiece in development. We need to teach our children
not just the knowledge they need to get paid jobs but also leadership skills that would
help them to lead their communities in development activities. They should have skills
that they can pass on to the rest of their communities instead of restricting them to a school curriculum that just reflects changes in the wider world which are what put schools under tremendous pressure to accommodate labour market needs (Lowe, 1997, pp. 23-28).

The Malawi educational goals do not particularly emphasize leadership skills. Leadership is mentioned under citizenship skills as it applies to national needs rather than to individuals and their communities – education should (a) promote in the learner national unity, patriotism, and spirit of leadership and loyalty to the nation, and (b) develop in the learner respect for the rule of law and good governance. We need to have a way of articulating leadership skills more clearly to reflect their pivotal role in the kind of economic and social development that could work for the people of Malawi.

5.6 Conclusion

The emphasis on education for social and economic development has led developing countries like Malawi to think that they need to catch up with the rest of the modern world instead of working on viable solutions to their perennial practical problems of poverty, hunger and disease. And instead of adapting Western knowledge to make it work in impoverished environments, developing countries seem to be spending valuable resources adopting Western technologies and culture in an attempt to develop human capital and modernize their societies. We need leadership in making choices that lead to effective solutions for our social and economic problems. Our school graduates should

25 Citizenship skills are the first national goal for Malawi’s education as found in all primary school syllabuses.
be able to make whatever technologies we can afford to be operational for as long as it can and not to solve its problems by simply replacing them. We need our old-fashioned manual type-writers to still be working today in many places that do not have electricity. And given our low incomes, bicycles and cars need to operate for many generations as they often form an important part of a family’s wealth and inheritance.

While Western-style education in Malawi and the whole of the developing world is a reality that cannot be wished away, we need to ensure that educational programs benefit individuals even when they do not find paid work. And if, indeed, education is the single most important key to development and to poverty alleviation, Malawians have no choice but to make our educational systems competitive in order to give our children the skills they will need anywhere in the world. Creativity and leadership skills may be the most important goals for our education system.

And for Education in Malawi to really benefit us all in Malawi, there is need to address the issues that make it difficult for us to really benefit from education as does the rest of the world. For example, hunger and poor health are still major issues affecting children’s participation in school. These problems still limit children’s participation in education even when access is no longer a problem. Boyd (1999, p. 240) says that the mere presence of resources does not an educational process make. This challenges us all in the business of education to not just worry about resources but also all the other things that must be present to make a good education happen. All the observations that the key-informants make are very pertinent and most of them have been substantiated by research findings. They, therefore, need to be taken seriously by education officials and all people
interested in improving the status of education in Malawi. I, however, would like to reiterate the following points in conclusion:

- Malawi needs leaders who don’t just know things but also understand things — leaders with a high sense of personal integrity, who can think critically and creatively to solve daily practical problems and have a willingness to continue learning. Education for development seems to have led to the abandonment of everything else that was integral to the education of children, especially in the Malawi traditional educational system. Traditional leadership is receiving less and less recognition because it cannot provide the kind of leadership that is required in a social and economic context that relies heavily on the written word and information technologies. If the traditional leaders are not competent any more, then our youths must show that they can be relied upon to take them through the 21st century. This would be the kind of development of human capital that would be meaningful to more Malawians than what is emphasized by the government and the donor community.

- The fight against poverty, hunger, and disease should not rely heavily on international aid. Local solutions like implementing school feeding programs, increasing food production, and making basic health facilities available to all especially in rural areas could go a long way toward helping children participate fully in educational programs and make teaching much more enjoyable for teachers. Introducing village-based community/adult education programs is also a
noble idea and I would add that there should be workshops in every community where people can teach each other the skills they need to survive in today’s world. This concept is not new in the Malawian society as there used to be such places in many villages in the past where men or women gathered (usually under a big shady tree) to teach each other and the younger boys and girls how to make the things they used in their daily lives like hoe-handles, reed mats, clay pots, brooms, and other common household items. The lessons were free and included the sharing of the latest village gossip and their ancestor’s teachings and words of wisdom.

- The present Malawi government justified the expenditure for establishing a national television station as the easiest way to reach all Malawians with the information they need to increase food production and live healthy lives. It claimed that it will be providing each village television sets and viewing points so that important information is disseminated to all Malawians in the quickest and most accurate manner. It is now nearly ten years and only a few Malawians who can afford to buy their own television sets take advantage of this television station. I would love to see the government implement this project soon to and start providing people with out-of-school education programs and ideas that they can use to develop their own solutions to the unique problems in their areas.
EPILOGUE: THE BEGINNING

The beginning of the next episode of my life seems to have very little to do with the end of this phase of my life. I had thought that this end was going to signal the beginning of a great career as an “expert” in problems of education in developing countries, their causes, and how to fix them. Instead, I am going back with an idea that needs “growing and nurturing” in order to make education happen – a real beginning. This idea was planted in me by my fellow students in the Centre for Cross-Faculty Inquiry in Education (CCFI) at the University of British Columbia (UBC) as my response (and theirs) to the problems of famine, disease, and poverty that are at the root of the low participation of children in education in Malawi. It is called the Fruit Trees for Malawi project.

Fruit Trees for Malawi is a project that picks up from where the Malawi Famine Project stopped. In 2002, my fellow students in CCFI and other well-wishers in Vancouver raised some money for me to buy food for starving families in my community in Malawi in response to the severe famine that had gripped the whole of the Southern African region. More than a 100 families, especially those headed by children and elderly grandparents, received food handouts during the four months I was in Malawi (December, 2002-April, 2003). AIDS hits hardest (re)productively active people especially in the 15-39 age group, leaving many families without anyone to provide for them. And since the cycle of drought, followed by floods, and then famine seems to be well-established in Southern Africa, there will always be the need for this kind of emergency aid almost every year unless some better solution is found.
When I came back, I was urged by my colleagues in CCFI to think about what could be done to help children in Malawi beyond giving them food handouts – something that could have more lasting benefits and perhaps, encourage children to go to school more regularly. Helping children grow fruit trees sounded a good idea since once a tree is established, it needs little care, and one tree usually bears more fruit than a child can eat. This means that the fruit trees can also be a source of income for the children and their families.

While this sounded like a perfect idea, someone asked:

Why should a child care for a tree that might be good for him or her in three to five years when s/he is hungry and sick now and does not even believe s/he will be alive long enough to see the trees bear fruit? What about the other poor people who will not benefit from the project – what will stop them from sabotaging the children’s efforts?

These questions call for a project that takes care for the immediate needs of the children while planning for their future. The children’s immediate needs cannot be ignored just because I think worrying about their future is more important. For the trees to survive, there is need for:

- a constant supply of water for the trees to survive the long dry months (July-December);
- protection for the young trees from animals, termites, and people who might be feeling bad because they have been left out even when they are equally deserving;
- the children to have their food and medical needs met now so they have enough energy and interest in the project; and
- for continued support for the children’s schooling.
To ensure that these concerns are taken into account, the best way seems to be to involve the whole community so that the village school plays a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the project. This will be literally putting into practice the old African idea of the whole community raising children, and it will mean that:

- everybody in the community will be responsible for the trees;
- the chiefs would provide land for planting a substantial number of trees and ensure that they are watered and protected from damage;
- the school curriculum will be built around the project so that as part of teaching the 3Rs, references, and examples will be drawn from, among other things:
  - Geography (weather and the effects of global warming)
  - Environmental Studies (environmental degradation and its effects on food production)
  - Agriculture (care of trees and other crops)
  - Science (food and nutrition)
  - Mathematics (marketing, family/home economics)
  - Biology (disease and health)
  - History (What do the elders know about famine, tree growing, disease, etc.?)
  - Languages (family/community stories)
  - Religions (myths and beliefs about disease, famine, and other phenomena that defy simple explanations as to why things happen)

For this project to succeed, it is obvious that I will have to give it my full attention, and that will almost certainly mean changing focus from worrying about the education of all
the children in Malawi to that of a small number in the project area. I am hoping that this project will work as a pilot project to show how the school curricula can be implemented so that they address the everyday practical problems of the communities they serve—a beginning in letting people decide how education is to serve them, an end to prescribing purposes of education for everyone. It is a donor-funded project but the donors in this case are not demanding that I implement their private agendas through this project.
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Appendix 1

UBC/MIE LETTER-HEAD

Toward Improving the Quality of education in the New Millennium:
The Perspective of Malawian Teachers

A Questionnaire for Teachers and Tutors

October 12, 2001

1. Introduction

This questionnaire has been prepared to give you an opportunity to reflect on your own performance as a teacher – how well you think you are doing your work and what you think is contributing to the level of performance you have reached. Some of the things that might contribute to the way you are doing your work could include:

Some of the things that may affect your performance

- Your love for children
- Your love of the subject or subjects you teach
- Your health
- Your academic qualifications
- Your training to become a teacher
- The support you get from education advisors, your Headteacher, and other senior staff in your school
- Further training in the form of in-service at school, zonal, district, regional or national level
- Opportunities to improve on your academic qualifications whether on your own or through distance education (correspondence school), or going back to college or university
- Instructional materials available in your school – students’ text books, teachers’ guides, reference books, chalk, and other teaching and learning equipment you need
to teach the subject or subjects and class or classes
you have been assigned to teach

- The class or classes you teach
- Your teaching an examinations class or being responsible
  for the national examinations in your school
- The classroom in which you teach
- The furniture in the classroom and the staff room
- Storage space for your school materials and teaching aids
- Where your school is – in town or rural area, and what is
  available to support you and your family’s wellbeing (land to
  grow food, clean water, electricity, easy transportation, etc)
- Where you live – the house and its distance from your school
- The school program and activities – the time-table, after
  school activities and your school’s involvement with its
  community (Does your school – staff and students, do
  volunteer work in the community in which the school is in?)
- Your own private commitments outside school – church,
  clubs, hobby, etc.
- Community support for school projects
- Your salary and how it is paid to you
- Other benefits like holidays, extra assignments for
  which you are paid extra money
- Your school administration
- The rest of the staff
- School discipline
- Your school affiliation (who controls your school – central
  government, Church, local education authority, etc.)?
- Is your school single sex (boys only or girls only) or coed?
- Your gender (because of your being a woman or man)
- Your family status – your being single (never married,
  divorced, separated, widowed), single parent, married, married with
• Other responsibilities in the school
• Your political views
• New demands and responsibilities from school administration and the Ministry of Education
• Cost of living in your area
• Your age
• (Add any other reasons you think are contributing to your current performance as a teacher)

2. Your task
Please, read again the list of reasons above that could be contributing to the way you do your work and
(a) write numbers 1 to 10 beside the reasons you think are contributing most to the way you are currently performing your duties. For example, if you said you think your performance is excellent, you can have your age as the number 1 reason for thinking that way while you might have your academic qualifications as the number 10 reason.

(b) on the plain papers attached to this questionnaire, please, write about an incident that took place in this school (or any other school you taught before you came here) that illustrates why you say that these factors contribute to your performance in the way you have chosen to assess yourself.

3. Please, complete this section as well.

School:..........................................................Date:.............

1. I am male female (please tick what applies).

2. I was born in 19.......

3. I have been teaching for .........years

4. I teach (name subject or subjects).............................................................
5. I teach (name class or classes) .................................................................

6. I am also a Mentor ❶ a teacher on training ❷ Neither a mentor nor a teacher on training ❸ (Please, check only one).

7. My highest academic qualification is (please tick one):

| ❶ Standard 8 | ❷ Form 2 | ❸ Form 4 | ❹ University degree | ❺ Other (Explain below) |

8. My highest professional qualification when I left college was (please tick one):

| ❶ T3 | ❷ T2 | ❸ Bachelor of Education | ❹ University teaching certificate | ❺ Other (explain below) |

9. Since I started teaching, I have upgraded my academic qualifications from (Leave the spaces blank if you have not upgraded your academic qualifications)

from ................................................... to ....................................................

10. Since I started teaching, I have upgraded my professional qualifications (Leave the spaces blank if you have not upgraded your professional qualifications)

from ................................................... to ....................................................

11. My other responsibilities in this school besides teaching include (list all your responsibilities):

12. My other responsibilities in the community include (list all other responsibilities outside school such as in the Church/Mosque, Farmers’ clubs, etc.

13. Ever since I started teaching I have attended in-service training courses (please tick only one):

   ❶ Yes
   ❷ No

If your answer is “Yes”, go to number 14. If it is “No”, it is time for you to take a break!

13. The in-service course(s) I have attended were designed to assist participants with:

   (please tick as many as apply for you):

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Understanding curriculum changes and how to implement them in the classroom
Upgrading my academic qualifications (pass Form 4, etc)
Upgrading my professional knowledge (eg. Learning better classroom management practices)
Other:

15. The in-service course(s) I attended were organized by (please tick as many as apply for you):
   1. My headteacher or senior school staff
   2. My educational advisor
   3. Sponsored by donors (name the donor if you can remember)
   4. Other (explain)

16. The in-service course lasted (please tick as many as apply for you):
   1. One week
   2. 2-8 weeks
   3. 3 months
   4. 1 year
   5. More than 1 year but less than 3 years
   6. Other (explain)

17. My overall impression of the usefulness of the in-service courses I have attended is (please tick one):

|--------------|--------------|---------|------------|--------|-------------|----------------|

Thank you for your time. Please, feel free to contact me any time you have more information you feel is relevant to this study.

Sincerely,

Emma C. Kishindo