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Capability Approach and Teacher Quality: An Analysis of Female Teacher Experience in a Rural, Malawian Community

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Recommended Citation

Capability Approach and Teacher Quality: An Analysis of Female Teacher Experience

in a Rural, Malawian Community

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

Annabelle Rodgers Hardy

May 2019

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Dr. Virginia Foley, Committee Chair

Dr. John Boyd

Dr. Bill Flora

Dr. Jason Horne

ABSTRACT

Capability Approach and Teacher Quality: An Analysis of Female Teacher Experience

in a Rural, Malawian Community

by

Annabelle Rodgers Hardy

This study used the capability approach as a lens to understand teacher quality from

both the perspective of educational leaders and practicing teachers in a rural community

in central Malawi. The overarching question of this research study was "How can the

capability approach inform our understanding of teacher quality from both the

perspective of educational leaders and practicing teachers?" The focus questions to

guide this research were:

1. What do national educational leaders value in a quality teacher?

2. What do rural, Malawian, female teachers value in teaching?

3. How do these teachers pursue and achieve what they value in teaching?

This study included qualitative data collection and analysis of two specific contexts: the

official context of educational leadership and educational policy in Malawi and the

teacher context of daily life working in a rural school in Malawi.

The official context was concerned with the larger field of educational policy that

impacts education in rural Malawian communities. These data were collected through

document review and semi-structured interviews with educational leaders at primary

schools, secondary schools, school zone leaders, and teacher training college staff.

Additional data about the official context were collected via review of documents regarding the official definition of quality teaching.

The research site for investigating the teacher context was a rural community in the central region of Malawi. Data were collected through interviews and observation of female, primary school teachers from four school sites within a single school zone.

The discussion and analysis of the data collected in both research contexts include the values of teacher participants, the ability of the teachers to achieve their valued functionings, common constraints experienced by teachers, as well as comparison of the valued functions of teachers to the valued teacher functions defined by official documents and educational leaders. The discussion and conclusions from this research include policy recommendations regarding teacher quality and thoughts on the further application of the capability approach to understanding teacher quality.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Tinashe Saka without whom this research would not have been possible. She made me welcomed into her community, opened her home to me, and supported me in learning the beauty, struggle, and complexity that is Malawi. Tinashe's tenacity, dedication, and grace are the foundation for a generation young Malawians who are facing the future filled with hope because they see her example. Her passionate vision and quiet sacrifices inspire me and so many others.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I deeply appreciate each of the teachers who participated in this study. These women welcomed me into their classrooms and their lives; their willingness to share their experiences was an amazing gift. I am also very thankful to the dedicated educational leaders who took time to speak with me and contribute to this work.

I owe many thanks to Dr. Virginia Foley, my advisor and committee chair, who has been a constant sounding board and offered invaluable guidance and support throughout this experience. I also want to thank Dr. John Boyd, Dr. Bill Flora, and Dr. Jason Horne for serving on my committee and encouraging and challenging me and my research.

I am grateful to have made the acquaintance of Dr. Kathy Haehnel, who has painstakingly read and critiqued every inch of this work. Her academic prowess has been a gift to me. Leah Fox, my informal yet invaluable assistant, has been my constant cheerleader throughout this process (and my life in general) and provided essential state-side support while I was doing field research.

The love and support of my chosen family has been a constant gift - especially Rick Hastings and John Carrico who are relentless in their love, humor, and support. Also, a special thanks to Tonya Treadway and the rest of my Ranger Family at Pisgah Forest Elementary School. Working full-time while going to school-full time has its challenges, and I can't imagine being in a more supportive work community during this experience.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Context and History

In recent years, there has been much discussion of how developing countries will meet the sharply increasing demand for qualified teachers while simultaneously focusing on improving educational quality. This is especially true on the African continent where the total population is projected to double from 1.1 billion people to 2.4 billion people between 2013 and 2050 (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). School systems are growing rapidly while simultaneously the systems to recruit, train, and retain an adequate number of qualified teachers struggles to keep pace (Bird, Moon, & Storey, 2013).

Specifically, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics (UIS) 2016 study of global teacher needs included an estimated need for more than 17 million new teachers in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030 in order to keep pace with population growth, address current gaps in school opportunities, and keep up with teacher attrition rates. The growing need for teachers in sub-Saharan Africa is exemplified in Malawi, where teacher growth is currently 1% annually, though estimates indicate the teacher growth rate would need to be 15% annually for five consecutive years in order for the nation to achieve universal access to primary education (UNESCO, 2013).

Earlier iterations of international educational development goals such as the 2000 United Nations' (UN) Education for All (EFA) 15-year plan included a strong focus on school infrastructure development and student access to school; UNESCO's (2015) lengthy summary report of EFA's efficacy in improving educational opportunities in

developing countries included only eight pages dedicated to the topic of teachers and the resources and training available to them. The small portion of this EFA report focused on teachers was limited to statistics regarding percentages of qualified teachers, student-to-teacher ratios, and teacher deployment strategies.

While EFA did not address many aspects of teachers and teaching, it did contribute to increased access to free primary school for children, including those in Malawi, where the percent of children enrolled in primary school increased by 4.5% annually between 2011 and 2015, resulting in a 19.5% overall increase in primary school enrollment in that same time period (MOEST, 2015). While Malawi and other sub-Saharan countries experienced success in raising the level of access to primary education, the region then encountered another significant challenge: low educational outcomes as evidenced through student achievement scores (Dembele & Miaro-II, 2013). As efforts to enroll more students in primary school succeeded class sizes grew significantly and previously sparse resources such as classrooms, learning materials, and qualified teachers became even more scarce. This held true in Malawi where the ratio of primary students to teachers in 2015 averaged 130 students per teacher in lower standards (MOEST, 2015) and the ratio of students to permanent (as opposed to open air) classrooms, was 105 students per classroom. Low student performance was also evidenced in Malawi where after four years of school, 70% of students were shown to be illiterate, and after six years of school, 30% of student were illiterate (High & Buckler, 2017).

The need for quality teachers and the infrastructure to support them is acute, as is the need for a more holistic understanding of their experiences and practices to better

inform teacher training, methods, and overall quality. Dladla and Moon (2013) emphasized the need for policy makers to understand how the context of rural teachers in particular affects teachers' training, skills, effectiveness, and agency. In many developing contexts, there is a negative connotation associated with rural teaching placements including the presumption that rural teaching is linked with fewer resources, poorer facilities, less remuneration, and fewer opportunities for advancement, but little attention is paid to potentially positive aspects of rural teaching or potential positive experiences of rural teachers (Buckler, 2011). More than 90% of Malawian schools are rural (MOEST, 2015) making it an apt location for the study of issues related to rural teachers and the experiences, values, and agency of teachers working in rural communities.

In addition to rurality, it is essential for research into teacher training and quality to consider the issue of gender. Despite efforts to recruit more female teachers into rural teaching posts, women are still underrepresented in rural teaching positions in many developing nations (Buckler, 2015). Nearly all teaching positions in Malawi are rural positions and a large majority of Malawian teachers will teach in rural settings for their entire careers (High & Buckler, 2017). The percent of Malawian primary school teachers who were female has increased from 38% to 42% between 2007 and 2015, and the portion of female secondary teachers in 2015 was just 30% (World Bank, 2018). There are still more gains to be made before women are proportionally represented in the Malawian teaching population; this makes women the largest untapped demographic from which to recruit new teachers, and, as a result, closer study of rural, female teachers is an important subject for educational development in Malawi.

Statement of the Problem

While statistics help to shed light on educational development needs, there is much left to explore regarding teacher experiences and agency, and the impact of these on teacher development in order to create a more complete picture of the educational development needs specific to teachers and teacher quality. Teacher quality and improved educational outcomes for students are an integral part of national and international education development goals and more information is needed about how teachers understand quality in their practices and outcomes. Attention to the real, not idealized, context in which teachers in developing countries operate is essential in understanding how to approach improving teacher quality and student learning outcomes (Bird et al., 2013).

During the 15-year effort to achieve the EFA goals established in 2000, researchers (Buckler, 2012; Buckler, 2015; Dladla & Moon, 2013) began to call for an approach to educational development that leveraged the context and experiences of teachers to inform more meaningful educational reform efforts. Similarly, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the UN's newest 15-year plan to support global educational development established in 2015, is the first UN plan to include a specific focus on teacher training and education. The framework of this plan expressed a commitment to "ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated, and supported" (Education 2030, 2015, p. iv). This suggests a burgeoning realization within in the international education development community that the experiences, values, and agency of

teachers must be key considerations in addressing the educational needs in the developing world.

Addressing educational needs in Malawi and other developing nations with a similarly large teacher gap and low student performance is a complex challenge and one that must be understood through a variety of perspectives. Building understanding of the practices, motivations, and challenges of female teachers working in rural settings is crucial to continuous improvement of teacher preparation efforts, teaching quality, and student learning. Buckler (2015), Tao (2012), and Yates (2007) suggested the capability approach can be applied to gain understanding of educational and teacher quality; this is done through focus on the agency teachers have to be and do what *they* value within the context of their daily work. Sen's (1999) capability approach provides a framework to understand both what is valued and the degree to which what is valued can be pursued. Little research has been done on the experiences and teaching practices of rural Malawian teachers, though many of the perceived challenges and limitations of rural education mentioned earlier in this paper are presumed to be barriers for students and teachers. Application of the capability model to the experiences of female teachers in rural settings in Malawi could bring clarity to the values and agency of female Malawian educators in rural settings, which could in turn inform teaching training efforts and policies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to use the capability approach to describe and analyze teacher quality in a rural community in central Malawi. This study used the capability approach as a lens to understand teacher quality from both the perspective of

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educational leaders and practicing teachers. The objectives of this study were to understand the similarities and differences in what is valued in teaching quality by teachers and leaders, as evidenced by government documents, educational leaders, and teachers themselves, to understand the degree to which teachers are able to pursue valued aspects of their work.

Research Questions

The overarching question of this research study is "How can the capability approach inform our understanding of teacher quality from both the perspective of educational leaders and practicing teachers?" The focus questions to guide this research are as follows:

1. What do national educational leaders value in a quality teacher?
2. What do rural, Malawian, female teachers value in teaching?
3. How do these teachers pursue and achieve what they value in teaching?

Significance of the Study

This study builds on Buckler's (2012, 2015) use of the capability model to define quality teaching as the degree to which teachers achieve the professional capabilities that are of value to them and will contribute to collective understanding of the application of the capacity model as a means of understanding teacher quality in rural schools in developing contexts. This research also helps to inform teacher training, deployment, and retention programs and policies in Malawi and other similar contexts.

Definition of Terms

Developing Nation: Developing nations are defined by the World Bank as

"low-income economies defined as those with a gross national income (GNI)

per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method, of $1,025 or less in

2015" (World Bank, 2016).

Government School: The government of Malawi defines government schools as

those whose operation relies on government financial and technical support to

operate and whose buildings and land are owned or sponsored by the

government (MOEST, 2015).

Mother Tongue: Mother tongue is defined "as the language usually spoken in the

individual's home in his or her early childhood" (UN Statistics Division, 2018).

Private School: The government of Malawi defines a private school as one that is

privately owned and relies on private funding for operations and

technical support (MOEST, 2015).

Qualified Teacher: In the international development community, a qualified teacher is

one who has "at least minimum organized teacher training requirements (pre-

service or in-service) to teach a specific level of education according to relevant

national policy or law" (UNESCO, 2016).

Religious School: The government of Malawi defines religious schools as schools

whose physical buildings and land are owned or sponsored by religious

organizations and thus are "categorized differently from government schools,

(however) their operation relies on government both for financial and technical

support (MOEST, 2015)."

Rural: The World Bank clarifies the meaning of rural in Malawi as follow: "Rural

population refers to people living in rural areas as defined by the national

statistical offices. It is calculated as the difference between total population and

urban population" (World Bank, 2016).

Usual Language: "Usual language, defined as the language currently spoken, or most often spoken, by the individual in his or her present home" (UN Statistics Division, 2018).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of this study are related to both the nature of qualitative research in general and the design of this research in particular. Qualitative research is grounded in the analytical thinking and choices of the researcher, which makes this type of research inherently subjective and at risk of being influenced by researcher bias. Additionally, this study will include a small number of participants, which allows for depth of understanding, but limits the generalizability of the research to the whole population. However, the study was designed to enhance transferability and allow for insight into capability approach and teacher quality that can inform thinking about these same topics in other similar contexts. Careful thought was given to steps to mitigating these limitations.

This study also includes delimitations that add focus to the research, including location, the population being studied, and the purpose of the study. In this case the participants are limited to female teachers in a particular geographically bound, rural community in Malawi.

Summary

Chapter 1 contained an introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, limitations of the study, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 includes a literature review examining key aspects of the study including teacher quality, the

capability approach, and the educational system and processes in Malawi. Chapter 3

provides a description of the methodology that was used to answer the research

questions. Chapter 4 includes analyses and clarification of the data. The conclusion,

summary, implications for practice, and suggestions for expanding the research are in

Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides summary and analysis of literature related to understanding teaching and teaching quality in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as relevant theoretical approaches that contribute to understanding of the research questions proposed in this study. The first section presents contextual information about teaching and learning in sub-Saharan Africa and in Malawi in particular, as well as information relevant to teachers and the professional lives of teachers in the region. The next sections include information regarding rurality in education and gender in teaching and learning. The final section focuses on the capability approach and its suitability as a framework for exploring the research questions at hand. This chapter provides a full introduction of topics relevant to this study and helps the reader make meaning of the findings.

Education in Malawi

History and Context for Schooling

The first formal education programming came to Malawi via Christian missionaries in the colonial era in the 1800s (McCracken, 1977). The missionaries were accepted by the tribes in Northern Malawi, resulting in the establishment of Western-style education in this region much earlier than in the Southern region of Malawi whose tribes were already affiliated with Islam and did not welcome the Christian missionaries or their school programs.

Known as Nyasaland during colonization, the nation was renamed Malawi when it gained independence from Britain in 1964, but it was not until the end President

Banda's 30-year rule under a one-party government system, that a new president,

Muluzi, was elected in 1994. It was then the country began to provide free primary

education for all children (Kamwendo, 2013); until 1994, Malawian government schools

had required tuition fees to cover the costs of school materials, textbooks, and uniforms.

Based on UN definitions, Malawi was and is still considered to be a least developed

country with a majority of the population living in extreme poverty, that made school

fees unattainable for the majority of citizens (Omoeva & Moussa, 2018). Beginning in

1991 and 1992 the government progressively waived fees for first graders and then first

and second graders. When primary school was made tuition free and universally

available in 1994, the government took responsibility for providing all learning materials

and uniform requirements were removed.

Since independence in 1994, primary school has been free but not compulsory,

and secondary and tertiary school remain tuition-based (Kamwendo, 2013). At the onset

of universally available primary education, school enrollment in Malawi increased by

50% in one year (Omoeva & Moussa, 2018). However, the national teacher to pupil

ratio did not change significantly during that period as the Malawian government hired

over 20,000 new teachers, though most of those teachers were untrained, which may

have impacted the quality of student learning (Grant, 2015).

Though the focus on free primary education was a welcome change, the Muluzi

government was suspected of serious corruption which resulted in a freeze on some of

the donor and development funds to Malawi in the late 1990s (Kamwendo, 2012).

Nonetheless, by the early 2000s, power had changed hands again and donor

confidence and financial contributions had been restored. In 2014, the Malawian

education system had grown to a total of nearly 4.5 million pupils enrolled in primary and secondary school, with 83% of those students enrolled in primary school (FHI360, 2014).

Since gaining independence Malawi has developed several long term national educational plans to guide development and resource allocation in regard to education and Malawian educational policy reflects a belief that equitable access to education is essential for development and success for citizens at large (Kamwendo, 2013). The first spanned from 1973 to 1980 and was primarily concerned with building capacity to fill secondary and tertiary positions with Malawian educators after the departure of white colonial personnel. The second plan, in place from 1985 to 1995, was focused on achievement of universal primary education, including a focus on reduction of school costs for families, increased educational access, and improved equity of educational opportunities for children. Though not all these goals were not achieved, the plan revealed goals and values of educational efforts during this time period.

The 1995 to 2005 national education plan was broader and included a focus on increased access to education, reduction of inequitable policies and practices in education, improved educational quality, development of institutional and financial frameworks, and intensification of financial management and funding options for education (MoEST, 2008). The current national educational plan in place from 2008 to 2018 clearly articulated updated strategic priorities for education development in Malawi; these included expansion of access to education, improvement of quality and relevance of education, and improved educational governance and efficient delivery of educational services. The plan focused on three domains of education in Malawi: early

childhood education; formal primary, secondary, and tertiary education; and non-formal education, including programming for out-of-school youth and adult literacy (MoEST, 2008).

Improved school access and educational attainment is linked to relief of generational poverty though increased income and ability to make a livelihood, and those positive effects grow generationally (Sabates, Westbrook, & Hernandez-Fernanez, 2012). In 2016, the gross domestic product of Malawi was worth 5.44 billion US dollars; overall, the GDP of Malawi was .01% of the world's economy (Rasmussen, 2018). According to UNICEF, 61% of Malawians live below the international poverty line, meaning that they make less than $1.25 a day (UNICEF, 2018). Malawi was ranked 153 out of 169 countries on the UN Human Development Index, which placed the country in the "low human development" category (Bernbaum, 2011). While other countries in the region, such as neighboring Zambia, have changed status from low income to middle income, Malawi continues to have the "low-income" country designation (Kainja, 2014).

Educational policy in Malawi reflects the belief that education a key national strategy for national economic growth. Even as countries in the region have increased spending on education, educational outcomes have decreased, largely due to uneven allocation of resources across schools and regions (Asim, Chimombo, Chugunov, & Gera, 2017), and at the same is true in Malawi. Evidence from countries that have made improvements in overall student outcomes have done so by focusing on increased resources for the lowest performing students and by addressing inequity in school quality (Crouch & Rolleston, 2015).

The nation of Malawi allocated 8% of the GDP towards elementary education, compared to 9% average GDP allotment towards primary school from other low-income countries (FHI360, 2014). The education budget was 23% of the national expenditure in 2014 (MoEST, 2015). According to the World Bank Group (2016), two thirds of the national funds allocated for education were spent on primary education.

School Systems and Management

Formal education at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels falls under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), and programing for out-of-school youth education is under the purview of the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports (MoEST, 2008). Early childhood education and adult education programming fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Preschool is far from universal in Malawi, with just 30% of children attending preschool programs and very few preschools existing outside of urban areas (Kamwendo, 2013).

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology manages schools, teacher deployment and curriculum via various centralized departments whereas the teacher supervision, continuing professional development, and school management is handled by each of the 34 education districts (MoEST, 2015; Asim et al., 2017). Each of these districts has a centralized office with a District Education Manager, a deputy, and a human resources officer. Additionally, each is broken into eight to 15 zones and each zone contains six to 10 primary schools supported by a Primary Area Advisor. Each school zone has a primary education agency and a teacher development center to support school programming, teacher training, and increase efficiency. The Malawian government prefers schools to be reasonably close to the zone's central resources to

ensure all school benefit from supervision and training opportunities provided at these locations (MoEST, 2015).

In Malawi, increased decentralization of education management responsibilities centered on the transfer of decision-making responsibilities from higher levels of government to lower levels or to the schools was an integral part of the most recent national education plan (Bernbaum, 2011). Functions that may be delegated as part of decentralization efforts include textbook selection, purchase of supplies, hiring, and placement of teachers, and developing new schools, and school site selection. According to Bernbaum, the motivations for decentralization include increased efficiency, improved accountability, and more autonomy for minority populations outside of the capital. The national education plan included a move to district-level management of primary education, while secondary programs, and vocational and adult literacy programs, would remain centrally administered. Decentralization is not shown to be directly responsible for increased educational quality, however, Bernbaum maintained that when decentralization efforts are focused on improvement of education quality and directly engage the school and the community, the more likely that it will contribute to overall quality.

The Malawian education system is structured to include eight years of primary school, four years of secondary school, and a four-year tertiary degree. Primary school is divided into three components; the infant section is comprised of Standard 1 and Standard 2 students, the junior section includes Standard 3 through Standard 5 students, the senior section includes students in Standard 6, 7, and 8 (Kamwendo, 2013).

Primary Education

The median age in Malawi in 16.5 years (Klassen et al., 2018) thus the need for educational services for young people in Malawi is young and constantly growing. School enrollment increased by 19.1% between 2011 and 2015 and the number of primary schools has increased 1.6% per year between 2011 and 2015, with an overall 6.4% rate of growth in the number of primary schools in Malawi during that period (MoEST, 2015). In 2015 there were 5,738 primary schools operating across six regional subdivisions in the country and all schools fall into one of three categories: government, religious, or private (MoEST, 2015). Fifty-five percent are owned by religious institutions, 39% are owned by the government, and 6% are owned privately While privately owned schools constitute a small number of the overall school, the number of private schools grew by 38.8% between 2001 and 2015. Both government and religiously-affiliated schools are financed and supported by the government and follow government policies regarding school operations and programming.

Since the government abolished school tuition and made access to primary school universally available to children, the enrollment rate in primary schools has increased significantly and matches or exceeds the rates of other countries in the region, however, the completion rate for primary school students in Malawi remains one of the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (Gawanani, 2013). In Malawi, 57% percent of youth have attained some primary school education and 5% of youth have no formal education experience, creating a total of 62% of 15 to 24-year old's in Malawi who did not complete a primary education (FHI360, 2014). According to Kamwendo (2013), student attrition is common at each transition level in education (infant to junior, etc.),

resulting in an educational pyramid with many students enrolled in Standard 1, but very few who survive to Form 4 in secondary school. Class sizes in upper standards are not smaller because there are more classes or teachers in these grades, rather the attrition and retention of students in lower standards contributes to fewer students in older grades (DeStefano, 2013).

Specific percentages of children aged 6 to 11 out of school by characteristic include: 11% were males and 10% were females are out of school, 5% of urban students and 11% of rural students were out of school, and 3% of the richest quintile of children and 18% of the poorest quintile were out of school.   According to MoEST (2015), the percentage of children out of school aged 14 - 17 is 27%, with 23% of males and 32% of females out of school, 23% of urban and 28% of rural children out of school, 16% of the richest quintile of children and 38% of the poorest quintile out of school.

Globally, only 14% of youth in low income countries complete upper levels of primary school (UIS, 2016). Reasons for student dropouts in Malawi included sickness, pregnancy, violence at school, lack of support, the need to travel long distances to school, early marriage, family responsibilities, employment, lack of interest from the learner, and shortage of teachers (NSO, 2017). As reported by heads of schools, family responsibilities were the most prevalent reason for dropping out and lack of teachers was the least common reason for dropping out (MoEST, 2015). In Standard 8, students are expected to take the Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education (PSLCE), which also functions as an entrance exam into secondary school (Kamwendo, 2013). To attend secondary schools, both public and private, students must go through a competitive selection process. Before universal primary education came in to place, the

percent of students passing the PSLCE and then matriculating to secondary school was just 11% (Grant, 2015). After the advent of universal primary education, the demand for secondary schools began to grow and previously existing distance education centers were transformed into additional secondary school for students with lower PSLCE scores that prevented them from attending conventional secondary school. This expanded the country's capacity to accommodate 40% of students who passed the PSLCE to attend secondary school.

Secondary Education

While a high percentage of Malawian children enrolled in primary school for some period of time, few survived to the secondary level, where it is estimated that only 16% of secondary-aged Malawians are enrolled in secondary school (Grant, 2015). Secondary school is broken into two distinct sections (Kamwendo, 2013); the first includes Form 1 and 2, after which students take an exam to earn a Junior Certificate of Education. Forms 3 and 4 comprise senior secondary school and culminate in the Malawi School Certificate of Education examination, creating a pathway to tertiary education. Typically, only 50% of senior students pass the end-of-cycle examinations. When broken down by support by sector, Malawi has the lowest amount per pupil spending of any nation in southern Africa while the per pupil spending at the secondary level is among the highest in Africa (DeStefano, 2013).

The high cost of secondary tuition is one of the major barriers preventing students from continuing school beyond the primary level; Omoeva and Moussa (2016) found that abolishing secondary school fees would likely increase student progression from primary to secondary school by 17.5% to 20.2%. Average school expenses paid

by families for students in Standard 8, the last year of primary school was about 20 Kwacha, however, the average school fees for the first year of secondary school was 3,763 Kwacha, which represents a severe increase in the cost of school enrollment which contributes to a significantly lower secondary enrollment rate.

Learning Outcomes

Akyeampong, Lussier, Pryor, and Westbrook (2012) noted that though access to school has increased in African countries, a high number of students fail to achieve competency in reading and math skills in early grades, the skills that form the foundation of future academic success. Lack of competence in early grades is a harbinger of future disengaged or out of school children and this is a concern in Malawi, which ranks in the 82 percentile in regard to universal access to school and in the 17 percentile in regard to learning acquisition when compared to other low and middle income countries (FHI360, 2014).

Results from the early literacy assessments given in Malawi in 2012 indicated that children in Standard 2 were able to name some letters of the alphabet and were not able to read any words from a simple story. In Standard 4, students were able to read 15 words per minute from a story with limited comprehension, indicating a growth in skills between Standard 2 and Standard 4, however the scores remained far too low for students who had completed several years of schooling and too low for students to be considered literate (Pouezevara, Costello, & Banda, 2012). The researchers conducted a linear regression to identify factors that were predictive of higher student reading achievement and found the following elements to be statistically significant: 1.) teacher sounded out new words two or more times per week (five words per minute advantage),

2.) students read aloud to the teacher two or more times per week (-13 words per minute disadvantage), 3.) the school's parent teacher organization met every 2-3 months or more (4.3 words per minute advantage), 4.) larger classes sizes had a significant negative relationship on children's reading ability. Additionally, Pouezevara et al. maintained that reducing class sizes to 50 students may increase students word correct per minute scores by three words and for each additional student added to a classroom the likelihood of a child not learning to read at all increases by 1%.

In regard to learning outcomes, the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) scores showed that Malawian student proficiency scores increased slightly in the 2000s though student achievement in the country was still lower than the average for all SACMEQ countries. The 2013 SACMEQ scores showed Malawi to have the lowest scores in reading and math of any country in the region on Standard 6 exams in which Malawian students had an average score of 494 in reading compared to the regional average of 558, and 522 in math compared to the regional average or 584 (Asim et al., 2017).

Lower overall student achievement may be attributed to the end of an era of selective enrollment for more privileged students and families (Gant, 2013). Grant also identified the influx of first-generation students who have barriers to learning such as less family support for schooling, grader work demands, less access to health care, poor nutrition, and uneducated parents as factors that may be impacting student achievement in the region. Additionally, Gawanani (2013) indicated that the use of narrow, school-based testing results in a limited measure of the intellectual abilities of people in Malawi, and she advocated for a broader perspective on educational renewal.

Overage Enrollment and Retention

The 2014 total enrollment rate of youth in primary schools in Malawi was 141%; this was due to overage enrollment cause by both delayed entry to primary school and a high level of grade repetition which both contribute to a high degree of overage enrollment (FHI360, 2014). Though children are expected to be enrolled in primary school at the age of six, many children are initially enrolled in school at a later age (Kamwendo, 2013); of students enrolled in Standard 1 about 62% were aged 6 which is the official age for entry into primary school; about 3% were under-aged and almost 36% were over-aged and ranged in age from 7 to 12 years old (MoEST, 2015). One reason for delayed enrollment of students is parental concern regarding young children walking long distances to school alone, particularly girls (Ravishankar, El-Tayeb El Kogali, Sankar, Tanaka, & Rakoto-Tiana, 2016).

Retention is another factor contributing to overage school enrollment; according to FHI 360 (2014), the average retention rate in primary grades is 19.5% with the highest level of retention in Standard 1 where 23% of students were retained. This, combined with late age at initial entry to school, caused the percent of overage students enrolled in primary school to increase in the higher standards, which is problematic, as students who are overage are more likely to drop out before completing the eight-year educational cycle (Ravishankar et al., 2016). Pouezevara et al.'s (2012) study of education in Malawi indicated that while the expected age of Standard 2 students was 7 years old, the average age in Standard 2 was almost 9 years old. Student repetition and dropout rates are impacted by factors related to household living, community life, and the school itself (USAID, 2014). At the household level, factors influencing

repetition and attrition include subsistence living in which children must contribute to household work and wage-earning work, missed school on market days, and low levels of educational attainment on the part of parents. At the community level, cultural practices, such as initiation ceremonies, can interrupt 2 to 3 weeks of an instructional term, parental safety concerns regarding the long commutes to school, and community video centers which admit children to watch videos during school hours are all contributing factors to school repetition and truancy. At the school level, the report identified high student teacher ratio, teacher absenteeism, poor school access, and ineffective teaching as factors influencing repetition and attrition of primary age students.

High levels of grade repetition also contributed to scarcity of resources as high percentages of students repeating Standard 1 led to limited resources and larger class sizes in early grades (MoEST, 2015). Ravishankar (2016) compared schools with significantly lower rates of student retention and dropout to those with higher rates of retention and dropout and found evidence that former schools were significantly different from other Malawian schools in the following ways: lower pupil to teacher ratio, lower pupil to classroom ratio, higher funding, and higher non-MoEST funding sources. However, these factors accounted for only 15% of the variation between schools with high levels of retention and those without. Future enrollment projections included in the current national education plan indicated the expectation that overage enrollment in Standard 1 would decrease by 2017 to just 105% of eligible children and that promotion rates would increase to 90% (MoEST, 2008). The plan also projected the pupil to teacher ratio would shrink from 80 students per qualified teacher to an average of 57

students per qualified teacher. No current evidence suggests that these national

education plan goals were reached, however, the inclusion of these goals indicated that

the Malawian government views reduction of overage enrollment via delayed enrollment

and retention as an important strategy for educational improvement.

Education and Vulnerable Populations

The poorest families, who are often the most likely to rely on income or labor

generated by older school-age children for survival, must be assured that the quality of

the education their child will receive by going to school has a value worth the financial

sacrifice of sending their children to school (Akyeampong et al., 2012). Despite the fact

that Malawian laws state the minimum age for hazardous work is 18 and the constitution

protects children from dangerous work, 31.1% of children aged 14 and under reported

working regularly and some of those regularly performed dangerous work, particularly in

the agriculture and fishing industries (Rasmussen, 2018). This included work on sugar,

tobacco, and tea farms; herding livestock; and fish processing and catching, and these

jobs are most commonly held by boys. Girls were more likely to work in domestic

positions and were possibly subjected to long working hours and abuse. According to

the Rasmussen, child trafficking for labor and sexual exploitations are also both issues

in Malawi.

There is a need for more social welfare and food security for students, though

given limited funding for a high level of outstanding educational needs, it may be

necessary for Malawi to organize those efforts through other government channels

outside of education, so that financing for education can concentrate on resources for

teaching and learning. In 2010 the Malawian government initiated a school feeding

program in several districts in the central region of the country with the assistance of non-governmental organizations and the World Food Programme, and the success of the program indicates that expansion of school feeding programs will be essential in assisting families in prioritizing schooling for their children (Kainja, 2014).

Malawi's national education plan includes goals regarding improvement of educational access for at-risk populations (MoEST, 2008). About 2.4% of students were identified as having special needs, though there were significant differences in the percent of students with special needs identified in the different educational divisions (MoEST, 2015). Learning difficulty is the most prevalent disability type, followed by low-vision.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is another factor impacting students and teachers in Malawi. Globally, two thirds of new HIV infections in 2015 occurred in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2018). The number of HIV/AIDS cases in Malawi is still high, but Malawi has made great strides in reducing the presence of the disease via prevention awareness, reduction in transmission from mothers to children, and increased access to treatment (USAID, 2016). The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Malawi has decreased from 30% of the population in 1985 to 8.8% in 2016, nonetheless there were an estimated 670,000 children under the age of 17 who were orphaned due to AIDS deaths (UNAIDS, 2018).

About 9% of students in Malawi are categorized as orphans or vulnerable children, meaning that they have experienced the death of one or more parent (MOEST, 2015). According to Rasmussen (2018), these children are especially at risk for participating in dangerous work or being trafficked. Children orphaned by AIDS are at

high risk of dropping out to pursue wage earning jobs, sometimes participating in prostitution or crime to aid in survival (Kamwendo, 2013). Teachers and students living with HIV or AIDS are more likely to be sick and miss school, and the increase in funerals due to AIDS related deaths also contributes to missed school days for teachers and students.

According to USAID (2016) women in Malawi are disproportionately affected by the disease, with 11.2% diagnosed as compared to 7.1% of men. About 10% of children under the age of 14 are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS disproportionately impacts women across southern Africa and it is commonly accepted that women are both biologically and socially vulnerable to acquiring HIV (Behrman, 2014). Women are at heightened risk for contracting the disease at the age of leaving school, therefore increasing the duration of school attendance of young women will lessen the likelihood of transmission of HIV. Behrman posited that increased schooling may have a positive effect on the cognitive reasoning, processing of risk taking, economic outcomes, and exposure to HIV prevention education, all of which could contribute to less risky sexual behavior.

Language and Education

The official languages of Malawi are Chichewa and English; and English is a mandatory subject in school and a proficiency in English is a prerequisite for earning any type of school completion certificate (UNICEF, 2016). According to Kamwendo (2013), in Malawi 70% of the population speaks Chichewa as their first language, 10% speak Yao, 9.5% speak Tumbuka, with less than 3% speaking Sena, Lomwe, and Tsonga respectively. In Standard 1 through Standard 4, Chichewa is the primary

language of instruction and students receive daily English lessons, then Standard 5 through Standard 8, the primary language of content-based instruction is English and daily Chichewa lessons continue.

In 1996, a mother-tongue education policy was initiated by the government supporting early-years education being provided in the mother tongue of the community, including Chichewa or other usual languages of Malawian communities UNICEF, 2016). Though this policy remains in writing, it did not begin to be implemented until 2004, in large part due to lack of resources, training, and materials in local languages. By 2009, a new national primary curriculum had been implemented which included texts and materials in Chichewa for younger students (Wamba & Mgomezulu, 2014). At this time Chichewa is the only local language that is taught (Kamwendo, 2013), though Pouezevara et al.'s (2012) study of early grade reading instruction found that 17% of students in their sample did not speak Chichewa in the home. Reliance on foreign donations for instructional resources and the fact that only Chichewa and two other local languages have standardized orthographies accounts for some of the failure to implement instruction in local languages (UNICEF, 2014).

Williams (2007) conducted a two-year field study of implementation of an English-language reading instruction program for students in Standard 4 and Standard 5 and found an unexpected negative correlation between the treatment and students' reading skills. Teachers reported greater success upon the implementation of early instruction in Chichewa; students are better able to participate and engage in learning (Kamwendo, 2013). However, the switch to English language education at Standard 5 brings more passive participation for students who lack language skills to engage in

conversation and questioning. Strategies used by Malawian teachers to support student learning in English include using simple rather than complex English vocabulary, use of code switching between English and Chichewa or other local language, and school-based strategies to encourage English usage, such as holding special school events such as debates in English. In 2014, a potential policy was introduced to make English the official language in schools beginning in Standard 1; this proposal was met with mixed reactions in which some stakeholders reporting this would improve student success and many passionately opposed the focus on colonial English and the implication that use of colonial English as a defining aspect of a well-educated Malawian (UNICEF, 2016).

Class Size and Teacher Allocation

The UIS (2016) report indicated a global need for 24.4 million additional teachers by 2030 and the majority of countries with the largest teacher need were in southern Africa. Additional teacher positions are primarily needed to address expected attrition of teachers from the workforce, but 3.4 million of those teachers represent new positions needed to support the expansion of primary education to include out-of-school students and reduce student teacher ratios to 40-1. The quick onset of universal primary education coupled with sizeable population growth leaves Malawi with a significant need for additional teachers and the shortage of teachers has led to large class sizes, particularly in lower grades (Grant, 2015).

While there is not strong evidence regarding the impact of larger class sizes on learning in richer countries, the SACMEQ results from southern and eastern Africa indicate that class sizes larger than 60 students have a negative effect on learning

outcomes (Ferhler, Michaelowa, & Wechter, 2009). However, a more recent study in Kenya (Duflo, Dupas, & Kermer, 2015) found that reducing class size by half did not have a significant impact on student achievement and concluded that a reduction in student-teacher ratio alone was not enough to impact student learning; pedagogical approaches and teacher training must be considered as well. Nevertheless, Malawi education policy does place strong emphasis on improving student to teacher ratios, particularly in primary schools. A study of test scores of 12,000 Malawian children in Standard 4 showed an overall difference of 0.2 standard deviation of scale-scores between children in schools with 30 students per teachers versus those enrolled in classes with 120 students per teacher (Asim et al., 2017).

During the transition to universal primary education, the student teacher ratio actually declined slightly from 68 to 62, however this was due to the hiring of unqualified teachers (Grant, 2015). Gawanani (2013) acknowledged the tension between the acute and immediate need for new teachers and the need to ensure that teachers were trained and effective; when education was made tuition-free and universally available to all Malawians in 1994, school enrollment doubled almost immediately, and the government was forced to recruit untrained, temporary teachers. According to Asim et al (2017) the ratio of students to qualified teachers to students actually increased from 82 to 108 during that time period. The number of qualified school teachers in Malawi increased by 35% between 2010 and 2016 from about 41,000 to 58,000 teachers. In some instances, schools have assistant teachers or volunteer teachers funded by the local community to ameliorate the teacher shortage, though these staff are not certified to teach (Pouezevara et al., 2012).

There are significant disparities in teacher allocation across various regions of Malawi (World Bank Group, 2016). Based on national averages, Malawi had 78 students per every qualified teacher (Asim et al., 2017), however the number of teachers working in a country or region is not indicative of how many teachers are available per school (UNSECO, 2016). It is important to distinguish between a teacher shortage and an inefficient distribution of teachers leading to a situation in which teachers are lacking in the most remote schools where they are needed most (World Bank Group, 2016). Pouezevara et al.,'s (2012) study of Malawian teachers indicated that class sizes in Standards 2 and 4 vary from 13 to 300, with the average class size in Standard 2 being 122 and the average in Standard 4 being 100. According to the World Bank Group (2016), inadequate distribution of teachers results in pupil to teacher ratios throughout Malawi that range from 7 to 1,220 students per teacher. Understanding the true nature of the teacher shortage in the region is confounded by reliance on average teacher availability which can hide significant inequalities in teacher distribution and a focus on quantity that does not account for the level of quality (UNESCO, 2016).

Teachers and Teacher Quality

Teachers and Policy

After a decade of consistent focus on universal access to education and great strides in that effort under the Education for All (EFA) plan, the work of the international educational development community has widened its focus to include not just on access to education but improving the quality of the education that is available (Howell & Sayed, 2018). The previous goals under EFA did not include consideration of teachers; while the new sustainable development goals established in 2015 include teachers, it is

still in a manner that limits the teacher role to a means of implementation and a set of qualifications (UNESCO, 2016). Numerous studies have indicated that quality teachers who can provide hands-on learning opportunities for students are instrumental in improving learning outcomes for students (UIS, 2016). This increasing understanding of the importance of the role of the teacher has contributed to the fruition of Strategic Development Goal 4.c in the most recent UN development plan which calls for the international development community to support the provision of teacher training and support in developing countries.

The involvement of the international development community and the private sector in education in Malawi is a major factor in education policy development. According to Wamba and Mgomezulu (2014), more than 30% of the recurrent budget of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology was development funded, with more than 70% of the education development budget also coming from donors. It is important to note partnerships with donor organizations often come with stipulations or requirements regarding practice and policy based on the beliefs and values of the private organization and do not necessarily consider the needs and values of the Malawian people or honor the autonomy of the Malawi nation to make determinations about the educational policies and mission of the nation.

Efforts to improve educational outcomes in Malawi must be sensitive to local differences within the country and be done with the involvement of Malawians (Wamba & Mgomezulu, 2014). While there is a tacit acknowledgement that teachers are a key constituency in successful educational reform in developing contexts, teachers are largely ignored or excluded from policy development dialogue as well as monitoring and

implementation efforts (Bird, Moon, & Storey, 2013). In some instances, communities feel a lack of ownership or participation in schools as the schools are seen as being the property of missionary organizations, donor groups, or governments which leads to the local community playing little to no role in the school community.

Teacher Training and Qualification

In Malawi, a qualified teacher is defined as someone who "successfully graduated from training colleges and are assigned to a permanent grade level post" (Asim et al, 2017, p. 32). Retention and recruitment of high-quality teachers is an important consideration in efforts to improve student learning outcomes and is key in addressing issues such as teacher shortages, status of education professions, and low status of teachers (Mtika & Gates, 2011). According to Bird et al. (2013) teacher education efforts in developing countries needs to become more sensitive to the contextual challenges faced by policy makers, school leaders, and teachers themselves in order to become more relevant and impactful.

At the advent of universal access to primary school, Malawi initiated a one-year training program in place from 1993 to 1997 in an attempt to accelerate the availability of trained teachers (DeStefano, 2013). In 1997 that program was replaced with the Malawi Integrated In-Service Teacher Education Program (MITEP) which served as a type of lateral entry teacher program in which teachers were placed in classrooms and provided with distance learning, training workshops, and site supervision to attain qualification, however the program was discontinued in 2003 due to concerns regarding program and teacher quality due to poor attendance and low standards for recruitment (Steiner-Khamsi & Kunje, 2011).

Creation of these types of alternative training programs for new teachers is a common way for developing nations address the shortage of qualified teachers (Chudgar, Chanda, & Razzaque, 2014). Alternative training methods generally include a lowering of the requirements of some aspect(s) of the preservice coursework or in school training and in some cases creates dual categories of teachers - some who meet the criteria for being a fully-paid career teacher and some teachers who serve short term contracts and may be paid less than their counterparts. The International Labour Office (1996) investigated the role of the World Bank in perpetuating underqualified and low paid teachers and uncovered that in the developing countries the World Bank had pushed policies in developing countries to replace higher qualified and higher paid teachers with less qualified contract teachers; additionally, their policies recommended undermining the status of qualified teachers through increased inspection and administrative control. Chudgar et al. (2013) cited a limited amount higher education in developing countries contributes to the shortage of qualified teachers in those same countries.

The current teacher education protocol in Malawi is the Initial Primary Teacher Education (IPTE) program (Asim et al., (2017). Initiated in 2005, IPTE requires one year of residential training at a teachers college plus an additional year of supervised student teaching at a school site (DeStefano, 2013). IPTE programs are located at 16 sites with eight being at larger public teacher training colleges and another eight located at smaller, private sites (Klassen et al, 2018). The admission process to IPTE includes verification of credentials and tests of academic and cognitive skills, including English,

math, and reasoning. More recently, some indicators of noncognitive skills related to motivation and talent for teaching have also begun to be considered.

In 2010, the Malawian ministry launched an Open Distance Learning (ODL), a second additional teacher training program that employs module-based training to teacher candidates via correspondence courses coupled with an evaluation system (DeStefano, 2013). ODL attempted to eliminate the expensive year of residential coursework at a teacher training center; teacher candidates in the ODL program take three weeks of intensive coursework at a centralized location and then participate in one and a half years of on-site training and practice at a school while participating in distance coursework (Asim et al, 2017). The ODL was designed to be a temporary program and accepted new participants only from 2010 to 2016, with 16,000 teachers completing the program. Between 2012 and 2017, about 40% of new teachers in Malawi were trained via ODL and the last graduates from the program were expected to be deployed to schools by 2018.

The initial IPTE cohort included 2,896 teacher candidates in 2005, and by 2010 enrollment had exceeded to goals in national education plan by enrolling 4,787 candidates (DeStefano, 2013). The capacity of residential facilities at the training colleges was and continues to be a limiting factor in student enrollment; efforts to encourage more day students have led to overcrowding in dorms because the day students simply crowd into the residence halls instead of traveling home (DeStefano, 2013). In the past, teacher candidate selection was completed by the Department of Teacher Education and Development, however, in 2017, the selection of candidates became the responsibility of the teacher training facilities as a part of larger

decentralization efforts within the national educational system (Klassen et al, 2018). In common practice, all individuals who complete the IPTE program are accepted into the education profession by the central government upon completion of training, though in more recent years, there has been a two year wait between when individuals graduate from training programs and when they are deployed to schools (Asim et al, 2017). One fifth of the 2014 graduates from teacher training programs did not enroll as teachers by 2016. This was the result of a number of factors including a national hiring freeze and delays in recruitment.

According to Ravishankar et al. (2016), survey and testing of Malawian teachers indicate that majority of primary teachers understood and could demonstrate basic mathematics, but could not apply those skills to solve problems, or the critical reading skills needed by students in Standards 7 and 8. The current practice in Malawi is to only hire teachers with an MSCE, however, there remain a substantial number of JCE teachers. According to MoEST (2015), 82% of teachers had attained a Malawi School Certificate of Education indicating completion of all four years of secondary school, 17% had attained a Junior Certificate of Education indicating completion of two years of secondary school. About .06% of teachers had a university education.

Teacher education and training programs strain under the weight of need for more teachers yet produce about 3,000 primary and 400 secondary teachers annually, far short of the number needed (Kamwendo, 2013). Policy is a key factor in managing teacher supply and the manipulation of variables such as the number of teacher training programs available, the prerequisite requirements for applying to teacher training, and the length and modality of the training program can all lead to changes in teacher

supply. In 2015, teacher training programs in Malawi received over 20,000 applications for just 3,158 available training seats available (Hau & Nampota, 2016). Though Mtika and Gates (2011) expressed concern that the teacher attrition rate of 10% in Malawi, this was relatively low when compared to England where 12% of candidates do not finish training and the United States where 30% of teachers left the profession after their first year of employment. DeStefano's (2013) research indicated the most common point of exit of Malawian teachers from teacher training programs was after the yearlong residency at the training center and before the year of in-school placement. The majority of men report transitioning to another career as the reason for dropping out, whereas, women report marriage or pregnancy. Additionally, Teachers failing the final exit exams from teacher training college is also a significant factor in dropouts.

Efforts to improve teacher retention needs to be done with consideration of the perspectives of teacher trainees (Mtika & Gates, 2011). The majority of research about why people enroll in teacher preparation programs has been conducted in the developed world and much less has been studied and understood regarding the motivations of teachers to pursue a career in education in developing countries. Teacher development efforts need to include opportunities for teacher to both develop their practices and construct a professional identify (Dembele & Miaro-II, 2013).

Teachers and Pedagogy

Though there is not a shared, international definition of what constitutes a basic, quality education, there is agreement that it would include basic competency in reading and math (Akyeampong et al., 2012). Despite contextual differences from one location versus another regarding what are considered to be desirable teaching practices, all

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teacher development training includes planning instruction, delivering instruction, and assessing student learning (Dembele & Liaro-II, 2013). Obiero and Akullu Ezati (2018) identified teacher expertise as the biggest single factor impacting student learning and it accounted for nearly 40% of the variance in student learning outcomes in reading and math, indicating that attention to teacher training and ongoing development is crucial in addressing educational quality.

In their study of teacher training programs in six African nations, Akyeampong et al., (2012) concluded that initial teacher training program must aid teachers in understanding the education process as one with learner centered problem solving at its core. Additionally, teacher training must include opportunities for teachers to construct and practice teaching, as opposed to having quality teaching described and outlined for them in a positivist manner that implies teaching is a closed-ended process. Akyeampong et al. determined that lesson design was taught with a singular correct approach to the extent that math lessons shared the same approaches and elements across whole countries regardless of differences in student population, readiness or need.

According to Howell and Sayed (2018), another issue facing teachers in southern Africa the movement from teacher-centered to student-centered teaching strategies, which represents a significant shift in practice and epistemology. Despite the rhetoric regarding student-centered learning, the majority of teaching in southern Africa remains focused on rote instructional practices and most teachers primarily employ lecture and note taking (Sailors et al., 2014). One reason for this was uncovered by Akyeampong et al. (2012) who noted that Malawian teacher trainees and newly qualified teachers

lacked strategies to interact with or respond to a range of learners, understand student needs and misconceptions, identify student background and characteristics, account for classroom dynamics, or generate practical examples relevant to students. Dembele and Miaro-II (2013) argued that despite this emphasis on traditional, teacher-centered teaching persisted because it met the archetypal understanding of schooling and was implicitly supported by central governments through distribution of textbooks, close-ended curriculum resources, and materials. Open-ended teaching strategies that require more active learning strategies and non-traditional pedagogical approaches are hard to bring to scale in any context, even wealthier countries with greater resources.

Teacher-centered instructional practices remain the most typical in Malawian schools despite the emphasis on active, student centered learning strategies in teacher training efforts; large class sizes, shortages of teaching and learning resources, and limited teacher expertise are barriers to enacting these strategies (Kamwendo, 2013). Additionally, though a high premium is placed on student centered and active learning in which students interact with one another and the teacher to make meaning, however, the majority of teacher education programs in Malawi and the region at large rely on lecture and teacher centered instruction (Harber, 2012).

An analysis of classroom observations in Malawi indicated that 35% of class periods are spent on passive learning activities, 20% on rote learning, 25% on active teaching, and 20% was off task time in which the teacher was otherwise occupied or out of the classroom. Tao's (2013) research indicated that the persistence of teacher-centered instructional strategies in southern Africa was the result of teacher emulation

of their own student experiences, lack of adequate training on other pedagogical

approaches, and large classes sizes with limited resources.

Despite these challenges, there is an increased focus on student-centered

teaching approaches across southern and eastern Africa, though there is grave concern

that the correct conditions are not in place to allow those practices to flourish (Dembele

& Miaro-II, 2013). To that point, Bucker (2015) recounted a conversation with a

Nigerian education official who acknowledged that teachers often are trained in

theoretical knowledge of teaching strategies and can write lesson plans that are

considered correct, however, the official acknowledged that the transfer of those lesson

plans from paper to effective practice may often be unsuccessful. Some organizations

promote the use of "teacher proof" curriculum that purportedly ensure that even a

minimally trained instructor can impart basic knowledge to students (High & Buckler,

2017).

Many teacher educators in developing countries have a background in teaching

secondary school and are not expert in teaching early literacy skills (UNESCO, 2016).

Also, teacher training programs often model the very same undesirable learning

practices they are trying to eradicate from primary and secondary classrooms (Harber,

2012). Teacher educators in poorer countries often have limited educational training

themselves (UNESCO, 2016). Another challenge is the misalignment of emphasized

curriculum and strategies between the teacher education programs and the expected

practices in schools (Akyeampong et al, 2012). The teacher education programs tend

to lag behind the progress of the schools system resulting in situations in which new

teacher trainees are being taught to use and implement outdated curricula and strategies that the school system itself is looking to eradicate and replace.

Reading instruction in many sub-Saharan African schools, and in school in developing countries at large, too often depends on rote memorization of facts and the learning of a second language consists of memorizing and reciting sentences without understanding them (Demebele & Miaro-II, 2013). In regard to teacher practices and behaviors, Ravishankar et al. (2016) reported that teachers had lesson plans prepared more than 80% of the time, regularly asked students questions or otherwise monitored their understanding of lessons and gave positive feedback to students. However, only 10% of students were observed asking questions or for clarification.   In a study in Tanzania, Tao (2013) concluded that teachers' lack of preparation for class was often the result of lack of training regarding lesson preparation which resulted in lesson plans that consisted of the teacher finding exercises from textbooks for students to copy down.

Language is another challenging barrier facing teachers and teacher training programs (Akpeampong, 2012). Schools in many African countries, including Malawi, are multilingual environments in which the primary language for instruction may not be the first language of either the teacher, the students, or both. According to Dembele and Miaro-II (2013) another layer of consideration of education in African communities is the problem of school being taught in colonial languages, English in the case of Malawi, with little regard for the mother tongue of the children or the traditional education of the local culture of the families and community; "ignoring the African child's

cultural background in the process of modern education is an enormous nonsense" (p. 190).

It is important to consider the cultural and national context of education and its impact on the attributes and practices of teachers; this is often unclear and difficult to account for when considering teacher efficacy (Klassen et al, 2018). These attributes and practices include consideration of a teachers' motivation, personality, beliefs, and values in regard to education.

Teacher Resources

Research from Wamba and Mgomezulu (2014) indicated that the swift move to universal access to primary school in Malawi compounded shortages of resources and by 2004 teacher to student ratios were 119 to 1, the student to chair ratio was 48 to 1, the pupil to desk ratio was 38 to 1, and the textbook ratio was 24:1. They also found that 23% of Standard 6 students did not have access to the basic learning materials of one exercise book, one pencil or pen, and one ruler at school. Students in rural areas were 11% less likely to have those materials than their urban counterparts.

Malawian curriculum includes a focus on language acquisition in both English and Chichewa, however, a study of literacy education (Sailors et al, 2014) determined there were not materials or courses specifically related to reading and literacy. Additionally, Malawi is similar to other countries in the region in that there is a scarcity of reading materials. Libraries within the classroom, school, or community are very rare and students lack access to literary or informational texts.

The change process to implement student-centered instructional practices is too significant for teachers to achieve without quality training complemented with ongoing

support and continuous learning opportunities (Howell & Sayed, 2018). Continuing

professional development is sub-Saharan Africa is particularly important and

challenging because many teachers received limited or condensed initial teacher

training and often training that did not align to the curriculum or practices expected in

schools. Burns and Lawrie (2015) indicated that in fragile contexts where poverty is

high, and nations are newly formed, the need for quality teaching is greatest, however in

these same contexts professional development is infrequent, often low in quality,

involves little to no follow up, and ongoing support is extremely limited.

Continuing Professional Development

Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa spend 80% to 90% of their education

budget on teacher salary (Asim et al, 2017), which leaves little funding for teacher

training, learning resources, or development of school infrastructure. In Malawi, more

than 80% of the education budget is spent of teacher salaries (Howell & Sayed, 2018),

meaning that few funds are left for student learning materials, let alone professional

development. Wamba and Mgomezulu (2014) stated that the three most influential

factors in student learning outcomes are teacher qualification, student to teacher ratio,

and the availability of resources for teaching and learning.

A common oversight in professional development programming is a lack of

consideration of the incredibly challenging and under-resourced environment in which

the majority of teachers operate, such as extreme lack of resources, pedagogical

practice, and the extreme poverty of students and families (Howell & Sayed, 2018).

These working conditions profoundly shape and influence teachers' perspectives and

confidence in their abilities to effect change. Sailors et al. (2014) critiqued the use of

large-scale reforms by educational develop organizations as unwieldy and out of touch with local realities and argued in favor of smaller scale, focused projects that meaningfully engage local educators and educational leaders.

The biggest obstacle to increased teacher quality is the lack of empathetic understanding of the context, resources, and mindset of practicing teachers and the exclusion of those teachers from teacher education planning and development (Tao, 2013). Quality continuing professional development is not just beneficial for student outcomes; effective professional development increases teacher's satisfaction, fosters changes in teacher's attitudes, and improves teacher's commitment and willingness to implement new innovations in their practice (Obiero & Akullu Ezati, 2018).

Perceptions of Teachers

High and Buckler (2017) examined the perception of teachers in Malawi and found that at the local level, teachers are generally seen as respected and valued members of the community. At the national level, teachers are either held to unrealistically high standards for moral, professional, and scholarly actions or degraded for failing to meet those expectations and therefore lacking in commitment to their work and their country. Negative media regarding teachers is common in Malawi, with a high-profile coverage of limited incidents of teachers becoming sexually involved with students, engaging in excessive drinking, leaving teaching duties to engage in side jobs to supplement income, and leaking exam answers to students in exchange for money (Kamwendo, 2013). Efforts that focus on issues of teacher management, such as attendance, salary distribution and misconduct, contribute both to a negative perception

of teachers and implies that teachers who attend school, get paid appropriately, and behave as expected are in need of no further support (Buckler, 2015).

Perceptions of the most important personal characteristics for teachers varies between one culture and another and are connected to the values and hegemony of the predominant culture (Klassen et al, 2018). Teachers who are part of the communities in which they teach may be more likely to have personal values that resonate with the larger values of the community in which they work, as compared to teachers who are deployed to unfamiliar areas (Buckler, 2015). The shared beliefs within a given community shape perceptions regarding the spoken and unspoken expectations regarding teacher behaviors (Klassen et al, 2018). For example, in Malawi the culture reflects a greater emphasis of collectivism as compared to a greater focus on individualism in the United States. Also, Malawi has a much higher level of acceptance of established social hierarchy when compared to the United States. Klassen et al maintained that these culturally-based social expectations influence teachers perceptions of expected behaviors in regard to their roles as educators.

Kamwendo (2013) maintained that primary school teaching in Malawi was seen as dead-end profession of last resort for people who did not excel in their exams and have limited alternatives compared to others with a similar level of educational attainment. This is part of a continuous decline in the status of teachers in the developing world and this is primarily tied to decreases in the real value of teachers' salaries and this is most pronounced amongst primary school teachers (Bird et al., 2013). Poor pay for primary teachers was often mentioned by teacher participants in a study conducted by Mtika and Gates (2011 and several primary teachers surveyed in

this study indicated that they were motivated to train for secondary credentials because secondary teachers are more respected and better remunerated. This is problematic because wider research indicates that higher salaries for teachers are associated with decreased teacher attrition, more highly qualified applicants, and improved student learning. Additionally, low teacher salaries often mean teachers work other jobs or take in other work in the afternoon and evening to supplement their income which impedes their ability to plan lessons outside of the school day (Tao, 2013). Low salary and lack of incentives contributed to a belief that teaching was not a viable career for someone looking to improve themselves or their economic status; all of this paints an image of teaching as a low status profession in Malawi (Mtika & Gates, 2011).

Chudgar et al. (2013) identified contributing factors in low morale within the teaching profession, including: teachers perceived lack of future advancement, absence of legal protection, limited support in challenging working environments, and low pay this leads to low morale within the profession. Low motivation, teacher absenteeism, disinterest in new techniques, lack of confidence, aggression, and leaving the profession are all linked to low teacher morale which can impact educational quality and student achievement (Buckler, 2015). According to Kamwendo (2013), disruptive student behavior in Malawian schools has become more prevalent since democratic rule began in 1994 and the overall level of respect for teachers has declined.

It is estimated that 20% of instructional time in Malawi's schools is lost; this is largely attributed to teacher absences (Sailors et al, 2014). Tao's (2013) study examined teacher absenteeism in Tanzania, a chronic issue in many sub-Saharan African countries, and explored underlying reasons for this issue. She found a complex

network of reasons for this issue including hunger due to lack of teacher lunch breaks causing teachers to miss their last class or be late to a class, too many classes with extremely large class sizes resulting in teachers missing class to take time to mark students work, and lack of management involvement in which head teachers overlook teacher absences or schedule staff meetings during class times. Additionally, some governments require teachers to travel to centralized offices to be paid or leave school to fulfill non-teaching duties which contribute to high teacher absences, though others identify teachers as at fault for failing to attend work (UNESCO, 2016).

Though there is undoubtedly a teacher shortage in Malawi, reduced working hours and underutilization of teachers leave Malawian teachers with a lighter workload than the majority of teachers in southern Africa (DeStefano, 2013). National policy supports a 3.5-hour workday for teachers of lower standards as opposed to 5- or 6-hour days for teachers of junior and senior standards. Some proposals had been put forth to consider a double shift approach to early grades in which students attend either in the morning or in the afternoon and students are distributed into morning and afternoon sections to relieve overcrowding. This approach is used in a number of African countries, but is very rarely employed in Malawi's primary schools.

Buckler (2015) indicated that teachers are often skeptical of new policies, in part due to overly ambitious claims regarding the efficacy of the new proposed intervention(s) combined with limited funding or human resources to support the implementation of the policies. The widespread dissatisfaction with education and schooling in the region extends into dissatisfaction with teachers themselves and adversely impacts the teaching profession (Dembele & Miaro-II, 2013). Teachers

relationships with the community in which they teach influence their response to professional development. A teacher who feels valued and influential at their school is more likely to engage in continuous professional development with a goal of implementing new practices to improve outcomes at their school (Buckler, Ibrahaim, & Gadar, 2013). Therefore, Buckler et al. advocated that teacher education program focus on helping teacher build and maintain relationships with the community. This is particularly important in rural communities where outside resources are likely to be scarce.

Rurality and Education

Rural Schools

More than 85% of the Malawi population live in rural areas (Bernbaum, 2011) and only 4 out of the 34 districts in Malawi are considered to be urban (MoEST, 2015). Malawi is one of the most rural countries in sub-Saharan Africa (High & Bucker, 2017). While education is under-resourced overall, within the education system there are persistent inequalities between resources in urban and rural schools, including the number of permanent classrooms (as opposed to outdoor spaces for teaching), science labs, and school libraries (Gawanani, 2013). In 2015, Malawian schools had more than 5.800 open air classrooms. The majority of Malawian schools had access to water via boreholes; 6% of schools had no water source. Buckler (2015) found that southern African schools without running water face even more challenges in meeting students' basic needs for toilet access and handwashing (Buckler, 2015). This is especially hard on girls who often consistently miss school during menstruation (Buckler, 2009). Buckler also noted schools without electricity face challenges regarding having

adequate ventilation, light, or heat. Additionally, children living in rural homes are less likely to have electricity, which can negatively impact their ability to study at home in the evenings (Bucker, 2015).

Twenty-eight percent of schools are located in areas that are inaccessible during the rainy season, which impedes the delivery of teaching and learning materials to schools (MoEST, 2016) and creates other complications regarding teacher salary payment and impedes the ability of teachers to travel from those areas for personal or professional reasons. The inequities in rural education have a harder impact on students with disabilities, resulting in situations where students with special needs are in larger classes where they are less likely to get specialized help and students with physical impairments are more likely to drop out or not attend at all because of the long commutes rural children typically make to attend school (Gawanani, 2013).

Students in rural schools are most often taught by teachers with least experience (Gawananani, 2013); this is due to a variety of factors including long commutes to school, poor living conditions such as lack of running water and electricity, limited access to medical care, limited access to transportation, and significantly larger class sizes. All of these factors contribute to difficulties with teacher retention in rural communities and create a situation in which the most inexperienced teachers work in higher needs areas.

Teacher Perceptions of Rurality

While there is a body of research available regarding rural teaching environments, little is written about how teachers perceive the impact of the rural environment on education (Buckler, 2011). Challenges in teacher recruitment and

development are sharpest in rural settings, though rural schools are often unseen due to the lack of distinction in educational development statistics regarding the needs and experiences in rural versus non-rural schools (High & Buckler, 2017). The policy and analysis that does exist regarding rural schooling creates a dichotomy between the concepts of rural and urban. Contrastingly, Buckler (2105) found that the teacher perception of rural and urban was more akin to a continuum that accounts for subtler differences in the notion of rural, i.e. a teacher who has a 20-minute matatu ride to school versus another who has a 10 kilometer walk to get to school. This perception is influenced both by teachers' own experiences and by their understanding of contexts in which they have not worked or taught.

More than half the schools in Malawi are within 10km of the centralized zone resources, with more than 35% being 10km to 30km from zone offices, and 6% being 30 km or more (MoEST, 2015). According to Buckler (2015), disconnect between teachers and educational policy makers is limited, it can manifest in a variety of ways; the two most common are either an increased sense of autonomy or feelings of helplessness resulting from the lack of guidance. Often, rural schools are more disconnected from support and services from centralized government supports and resources, which contributes to a feeling of abandonment and may exacerbate poor instructional practices and teacher absenteeism (Murtin, 2013). Elements that contribute to a negative perception of rural teaching posts include increased isolation due to limited communication and transportation infrastructure, loss of income due to late salary payment or the necessity to pay out of pocket costs to travel long distances to banks (Buckler, 2015). Overall, Malawian teachers report higher satisfaction with

working in a school near their home, or at least in close proximity to a tarmac road or trading center which facilitates ease of transportation to visit home communities. This supports the assumption that the most remote rural positions are the least desirable for the majority of teachers (Ravishankar et al, 2016).

Negative associations with rural teaching posts are exacerbated by policies that force teacher deployment to rural areas or punish poor or badly behaving teachers by deploying them to rural areas (Bucker, 2015), both of which are practices in Malawi. Other policy practices present in Malawi and other countries in the region, such as hardship pay for rural teachers and requiring teachers who receive scholarships to teach in remote rural schools, contribute to a negative perception that rural settings are inherently problematic and challenging (High & Buckler, 2017).

"However, for much of the EFA era, teacher policies have continued to be designed by (usually) male elites in urban, centralised contexts, driven by a top-down human capital paradigm, written to meet the aspirations of global agenda, and have their outcomes evaluated through national and international quality metrics. As a result . . . these policies have little resonance with what is going on in classrooms" (Buckler, 2015, p. 151). Malawian schools need teachers who are prepared to teach and prepared to teach in a way that mitigates the particular challenges of rural development that create logistical and cognitive barriers for learners (High & Buckler, 2017). Binary descriptions of schools as either urban or rural, or either overstaffed or understaffed often perpetuate inequalities in teacher distribution and leave room for personal discretion and political influence in teach deployment decisions (Asim et al, 2017).

Teacher Deployment

Training and recruiting teachers to rural areas is a significant need and one that comes with a number of challenges. National statistics can hide inequalities in educational opportunities between rural and urban regions within a country (Buckler, 2011), and Asim et al (2017) provided the example of one district in southern Malawi in which the pupil to teacher ratio varied from 27 to 130 within a geographical area of just a few square kilometers. Schools with the high student to teacher ratios are overwhelmingly likely to be in less developed areas without access to electricity, reliable drinking water, access the medical facilities or roads (Asim et al, 2017). This uneven distribution of teachers most likely amplifies the disadvantages in poor and remote communities, which implies that improvement of efficiency and equity in teacher allocation and deployment has the potential to make a positive impact on student learning.

Since reforms to the national teacher training program were implemented in 2005, all teachers have been asked to commit to five years of teaching in a rural area; however, 30 out of the 34 districts in Malawi are considered rural, with no policy distinction between schools in rural towns versus schools in extremely remote areas (Asim et al, 2017). According to Dladla and Moon (2013), the challenges facing teachers in the most rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa, including larger class sizes, poorer facilities, lower pay, and fewer access to amenities, create barriers for improved learning outcomes in rural areas. Across sub-Saharan Africa, teachers express a strong desire to work in communities in or closer to larger settlements with more

amenities and this is a factor that contributes to inequitable distribution of educational resources across nations (Asim et al, 2017).

Government institutions are in need of policies and practices that help to mitigate the disparity of educational resources in opportunities in remote communities though creating policy and management systems (Asim et al, 2017). As with many countries in the region, Malawi used a two-tiered approach to teacher recruitment and management in which the central government was responsible for recruiting teachers into the system and assigning them to districts. Then district officials deployed teachers to specific schools. In Malawi, gaps in information from MoEST and payroll databases give an incomplete picture of where teachers were deployed and the lack of clarity regarding current teacher allotment compounds inequitable distribution of teachers (World Bank Group, 2017). At the district level, managers were expected to prioritize allocating teachers to schools with a student to teacher ratio greater than 60, though three quarters of schools in Malawi have a higher ratio, so in practice this directive is not specific enough to ensure teachers are allocated to the neediest and often more remote schools. It is not uncommon for teachers to work in a different area from where they were originally deployed, which further complicates efforts to deploy teachers effectively (Asim et al, 2017).

Teachers in sub-Saharan Africa expressed a strong desire to work in communities in or closer to larger settlements with more amenities and will advocate for desirable posts (Ravishankar et al, 2016). Asim et al. (2017) maintained that the amount of discretion allotted to decision makers regarding teacher deployment combined with the influence of political networks facilitates circumstances in which well-

connected teachers can influence placement decisions and resist being placed in remote and/or high needs schools. They suggest a system which would allow for up-to-date information about teacher placement combined with more precise policies or regulations this would decrease individual discretion and therefore increase the autonomy of officials involved in deployment decisions by reducing the political pressures they experience.

Teacher transfer and movement between districts is common and done by local districts with the approval of MoEST (World Bank Group, 2017), though the movement also contributes to confusion about actual distribution of teachers in Malawi. According to Asim et al. (2017), teachers may request new school assignments based on needs. For example, for example if a teacher is assigned to a remote school or a school without teacher housing and the teacher has to walk or bike a distance to school, the teacher may get a medical note from a doctor stating that he or she cannot walk or bike long distances and be reassigned. Additionally, married teachers, especially women, may request transfer to be placed at a school near their spouse. There is speculation that both exemptions are abused or used dishonestly by some teachers. Also, five to ten percent of teacher applicants do not report to their assigned position at the start of the year and some of those report to other preferred school districts and are given positions without documentation or by using forged documents.

Rurality and Financial Incentives

Many countries in the region provide financial incentives to teachers who teach in the least desirable settings (Ravishankar et al., 2016). While Malawi does have a financial incentive system for rural teachers, there is no distinction between different

degrees of rurality, meaning that a teacher working very near a trading center would receive the same incentive as a teacher working in a very remote area that is difficult to access. Additionally, teachers working closer to towns were more likely to actually receive the bonus, whereas teachers in remote areas who are most in need of the compensation are less likely to receive their bonus or to receive it in a timely manner because of the difficulty of travel to and from remote locations. Also, Gawanani (2013) maintained that the incentive is not adequate and inducements to teach in remote areas should also include incentives such as scholarships for further certification.

According to Asim et al., in 2010 Malawi allocated funds for 20% of teachers working in remote schools to receive a hardship allowance to incentivize teacher to take positions in challenging locations, however, there were no centralized rules or criteria for who would be eligible. The government had originally planned on targeting the hardship allowance to 15,000 teachers, however, the lists of eligible teachers submitted from each district totaled 37,562 teachers. Some very remote school were excluded and, in some cases, only some teachers at a particular school would be found eligible; the payment of the allowances was inconsistent and resulted in legal suits by those who were promised funds but not paid. By 2015, 80% of teachers are eligible for the hardship allowance and the allowance itself is valued at only one seventh of the average monthly teacher salary, as opposed to the half the annual teacher salary, the bonus amount that was originally intended when the program began in 2010.

After conducting interviews with a variety of stakeholders, it was determined that the current practice of providing a 2% or 10,000 Kwacha bonus to all teachers working in rural areas did not account for the degree of difference in some more remote

communities as opposed to communities located in close proximity to trading centers (World Bank Group, 2016). Under the current model, 85% of teachers in Malawi receive the hardship bonus despite the fact that some teachers receiving that bonus may work in more strenuous or remote conditions than others.

A case study included in Asim et al.'s (2017) research on teacher distribution in Malawi illuminated the challenges and inequities in current teacher deployment practices. In a rural district in Malawi revealed that in one district, the school in the trading center had a student teacher ratio of 49 to 1, the school 4km from the trading center had a ratio of 79 to 1, and the remote school 20km from the trading school had ratio of 131 to 1. In 2016, the school in the trading center received no new teachers, as per the regulations, the school 4km outside of the trading center received 4 new teachers, lowering the ration to 65 to 1, and the remote school with the higher need received only 2 teachers, lowering the ration to 98 to 1. However, neither of the teachers allocated to the remote school actually arrived to work at the school. One of teachers moved to another district and the other was transferred to a school with a ration of 49 to 1 in order to be near her husband; the headteacher was unaware of why none of the teachers arrived at the school. Despite the wide variety in schools and the challenges associated with each, teachers at all three schools were eligible for the same rural hardship financial incentive. Reform of the financial incentive program is a current priority for the Malawian government.

Gender and Education

Parity versus Equity

Unterhalter (2017) noted the newest development goals adopted by the UN in 2015 included broad language about gender equity and empowerment of women, though the indicators designed to measure progress towards this goal were narrow measurements of gender parity in school enrollment and various levels, with no focus on women's broader engagement and wellbeing. Gender parity in education is concerned with uniformity of measurable access to goods and services and is often the primary measure of gender equity in education (Chisamya, Dejaeghere, Kendall, & Kahn, 2012). However, equity is not as easily or uniformly measured and thus less tangible and easily counted. While many critical feminist scholars have studied issues of gender equity and education in the developing world, this perspective has not been widely included in the education agendas of key stakeholders. It is not enough for educational policy to adopt practices that support gender parity, particularly if equity is not positively impacted in the social and economic spheres of society.

Malawi has been especially successful in increasing female enrollment in schools and more recently, girls outnumber boys in many schools and regions throughout the country (Chisamya et al, 2012). In the early grades, male and female students were relatively equally represented in the student population, however, by Standards 7 and 8 the dropout rates for females was significantly higher than that of males (Ravishankar et al, 2016). In later primary school years and secondary school 32% of girls are out of school compared to 23% of boys (FHI360, 2014). Haugen et al. (2014) noted that gender discrimination is greater at the secondary level across all of Africa. Despite this,

Grant (2015) analyzed national longitudinal results from Malawi's Demographic and Health Survey which indicated that the portion of women who have never attended school dropped from 40% to 8% between 1992 and 2010. The percent of women who had attended primary school beyond Standard 5 increased from 28% to 40%. In 1992, only 7% of women had attended secondary school and grew to 27% in 2010.

Status of Women

The continuous increase in female enrollment in schools at all levels indicated high levels of growth in gender parity in regard to education, but gender inequity persisted in Malawi (Chisamya et al, 2012). Sexualization of women was widespread and was congruent with the sexualization of girls in schools. In Malawi, interactions at school, within the community, and the broader socio political and economic systems were all found to perpetuate gender inequity.

Gender inequalities within the broader society of Malawi are seen in social customs, national law, ownership laws, inheritance rights, civil liberties, and the social norms regarding physical violence (Chisamya et al, 2012). Physical violence against women is prevalent in Malawi; wife beating is widely accepted, and one-third of women aged 15 to 49 reported experiencing violence, most often at the hands of spouses. Women have limited autonomy when it comes to sexual consent or reproductive decision making.

About 50% of women in Malawi get married before the age of 18 (Omoeva & Moussa, 2018). Care-work, including caring for children, spouses, parents, and relatives is considered the work of women and this contributes to women having longer work hours, often with no remuneration (Chisamya, 2012). Educational opportunity in

Malawi has expanded more quickly than the availability of wage-earning jobs and the job market is unable to absorb high numbers of newly educated young adults (Grant, 2015). Women are even less likely than men to find wage-earning positions. Nonetheless, an increase in the education rate for females has the potential to positively influence a number of other wellness factors, including increased percentage of women who delay marriage to beyond 18 and a significant decrease in the maternal mortality rate (Kainja, 2014).

Female Student Experience

According to Omoeva and Moussa (2018) the mean years of schooling attained by women has increased by an average of 1.2 to 1.8 years in Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda since the inception of universal primary education. This magnitude of change in education attainment affected women more than men, resulting in a 13% to 29% decrease in the educational attainment gap between men and women in those countries. Additionally, this study found significant increases in female employment rates, lower teenage sexual activity, lowered rates of teenage marriage, lower rates of teenage births, and in Malawi, women were 3% less likely to be in the bottom 40% of household wealth indicators.

Schooling can contribute to delayed age at first birth for young women by providing new options for women in the workforce, greater decision-making autonomy, and simply by keeping young women engaged in education thereby making it less likely that they will be sexually active or married (Grant, 2015). It is also true that schools and schooling do not automatically lead to postponement of pregnancy, especially in cases where schooling fails to transform women's perception of what roles are available to

them, when pedagogical practices and curricula fail to challenge gender stereotypes, and when girls are at risk of sexual harassment at school and while traveling to school.

Often discrimination against women in the school setting stemmed from a belief that school-based skills would not be useful for women's future roles as wives and caregivers (Chismaya et al, 2012). Sexualization of young women is pervasive in Malawi and is often experienced or observed at schools. Though many teachers report young girls make excellent students because they sit still and concentrate better than boys, after puberty, girls are perceived as too old to be good students. Older girls were subject to name calling regarding their sexual maturity and that girls attempting to return to school after marriage or pregnancy were mocked. Mocking repeaters and overage girls was reported to be common practices and some instances of male teachers engaging in sexual relationships with overage girls were also reported in Malawian schools and likely contribute to student attrition rates (Ravishankar et al, 2016).

Some classroom circumstances and practices contribute to female dropout rates such as lack of toilet facilities which results in missed schooling for girls during menstruation. Also, when resources such as desks and seats in classrooms are limited, they are allocated to males while girls are expected to squat on the floor (Ravishankar et al, 2016). According to Chisamya et al (2012), it is possible that the participation of young women in education can increase their vulnerability; parents and girls have expressed concern that their future opportunities for marriage and dowry may be compromised by schooling as well as concerns regarding the lack of economic opportunity for women who do become educated. The attrition of females from upper grades and secondary school is especially concerning because when there are few girls

in school, there are few women who can move ahead to become teachers (Haugen et al, 2014).

Female Teacher Experience

Haugen et al (2014) stated that female teachers are widely believed to play a significant role in increasing both the access to schooling as well as its quality for school-age girls, and while there is a call for more female teachers as a strategy to increase the educational attainment of young women, there is little empirical evidence that actually examines the role of female teachers on educational efficacy for girls. However, it is true that as the number of female teachers has increased, so has the number of female students, perhaps due to the willingness of parents to send young girls to school when female teachers are present. Because of the caretaking role assumed by women they are less likely to be able to attend residential training school or be deployed in areas away from their familial home (Haugen et al, 2014). This is a barrier to women becoming trained as teachers or being deployed to teaching positions outside of their home community.

Teacher training programs often model the very same undesirable learning practices they are trying to eradicate from primary and secondary classrooms; for education to truly become a democratizing force in sub-Saharan Africa then teacher training programs must make intentional shift to ensure that teaching practices taught to preservice teachers and the manner in which those lessons are taught reflect the democratic values the nation desires to foster (Harber, 2012). Gender sensitivity training for teachers, school leaders, and students is necessary to forward the goals regarding increased female education attainment (Haugen et al, 2014).

According to Haugen et al (2014), gender-based workplace violence impacts female teachers and this issue is exacerbated by lack of school oversight which creates a situation in which women have little recourse to report workplace safety or discrimination issue. Another barrier for female teachers was low pay which means women may not be able to pay for food and other basic needs and that women were taking on outside employment to supplement their income, in addition to their caregiving responsibilities (Haugen et al, 2014). Tao (2013) acknowledged that women are prevented from pursuing professional advancement due to the domestic duties that limit the time and energy they can dedicate to professional training. This is further exacerbated by the fact that female teachers are more likely to pursue lateral or lower tiered training credentials which results in lower pay and low status within the profession (Haugen et al, 2014).

Expanding the economic opportunities for women who complete school (including future teachers) is essential and achieving this will include working to reduce the larger social barriers that impact female enrollment (Haugen et al, 2014). A key strategy in achieving this may be increasing funding and support to ensure that schools employ gender-sensitive classroom practices that foster women's empowerment (Grant, 2015).

Capability Approach

Theoretical Frameworks for Educational Development

Are policies and educational development plans created in a vacuum by people too far removed from the day-to-day realities and work in developing contexts? Are international organizations and members of nations' urban elite making policies that

respond to statistics and logic, but are out of step with reality (Bonnet & Pontefract 2008; Buckler, 2011; Buckler, 2016; Lewin 2002)? These pertinent, critical questions have been raised over the past decades and call attention to the need for close and complex analysis of teaching and learning in the developing world. Many dimensions of education are not easily measurable, and we must be critical of the sometimes politicized or oversimplified measurement of educational research efforts which attempt to pare down the complex relationships between elements in education systems into simple causal relationships between isolated treatments or conditions (Unterhalter, 2017).

There have been many approaches to conceptualizing and studying educational quality in the context of international development. One useful lens of study has been the human capital approach, which is concerned with contributions to national economic advancement and is focused on inputs and outputs, such as numbers of teachers and students, cost of materials, and test scores (Tikly, 2011). Another insightful theoretical lens for the study of educational development is the human rights approach in which economic productivity is secondary to justice and morals; education is an important topic in human rights approaches as a setting in which to advance human rights as well as a tool by which to achieve justice (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

While human capital and human rights approaches have often been used in educational development research, these approaches have also been criticized for their lack of focus on teaching and learning in and of itself (Baxen, Nsubuga, & Johanson Botha, 2013; Tikly & Barrett, 2011). Baxen et al.'s (2013) work examined the capability approach as compared to human capital and human rights approaches; these authors

acknowledged that the full potential of capability approach in education is still being defined and understood, but also acknowledged the promise of the capability approach to address some of the gaps identified in human capital and human rights approaches.

Understanding the Capability Approach

The capability approach is grounded in a normative framework which is informed by social justice principles and committed to the dignity of each individual; capability approach is concerned with providing individuals the freedom to pursue lives they value (Powell & McGrath, 2014). The capability approach is especially valuable because the focus on individual's opportunities to achieve valued functionings extends beyond calculation of peoples goods, incomes, or other means, as is more typical in other theories of justice (Sen, 2005). Originally proposed in the 1980s by Amartya Sen, economist and philosopher, the capability approach is focused on understanding equality in terms of the freedom people have to use their resources to be and do what they value in life, rather than understanding equality in terms of access to resources (Buckler, 2015). Capability approach allows for a broader understanding of human development because it accounts for the understanding that income, happiness, or resources "are needed as means to other valued ends, and not for their own sake" (Baxen et al., 2013, p. 96).

The capability approach has a dual evaluative focus on realized functionings and capability sets. The first is concerned with what individuals are actually able to do and the second is focused on the actual opportunities available to individuals, in essence the things an individual is free to do (Sen, 1999). Traditional, one-dimensional analysis of larger issues such as the impact of poverty or gender inequity may not reveal crucial

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dimensions of the issue; the dual nature of capability approach draws attention to multiple dimensions of complex problems (Robeyns, 2017).

Capabilities, functioning, and agency are key ideas in capability theory. Baxen et al. (2013) explained these key concepts as follows: capabilities are people's real or actual opportunities to engage in valued functionings, functionings are activities that contribute to well-being, and agency refers to the freedom people have to strive towards the actions and states that are valued. A lack of agency results in constraints which limit a person's ability to strive towards and achieve the values activities or states.

Capability approach is concerned with the opportunities available to people to have combinations of functionings, whether or not a person makes use of those opportunities (Sen, 2005). The freedom in the capability approach is the extent to which a person chooses to enact functionings available to them. In capability approach, freedom is not enacted in the choice itself, but in the agency individuals have to choose or not choose from opportunities available to them. Freedom or lack of it is measured by the existence or nonexistence of alternative possible choices available to individuals (Sen, 1999).

In a study applying the capability approach to vocational education programing in South Africa, Powell and McGrath (2016) discussed Sen's notion of functions versus capabilities and the advantages of capability approach versus input-output models. The capability approach accounts for *both* the achievement of a functioning (such as earning a certification) as well as the choices and opportunities available to an individual based on achievement of the functioning. Solely accounting for achievement of the functioning may exclude valuable information about differences in individual's agency to access

desired opportunities to express those functionings. Unterhalter (2017) identified

promising aspects of the capability approach, noting that it "entails not so much

counting outputs, such as numbers of children in school, but opportunities, that is

capabilities, the conditions that constrain or facilitate these, and whether or not

capabilities are realised as functionings" (p. 5).

Issues within Capability Approach

Two criticisms of capability approach include its abstract nature and the overly-

individualistic nature of this approach (Baxen et al., 2013). In a generational study of

teacher's lives in Turkey, Cin and Walker (2012) used capability approach to generate

lists of functionings and capabilities of female teachers of different ages and eras in

Turkey. Their use of lists was both context-sensitive and provided definition and

structure to their study. The authors reflected that capability approach allowed for an

accurate and comprehensive understanding of individual freedoms by examining

functionings available to and valued by the women in their study and how these

functionings were present or absent from their lives.   Cin and Walker's (2012) work

included a table of valued functionings by participants with indications of which value

functionings could not be attained by each generation of women teachers. The authors

also noted that social constraints (gender roles, etc.) can influence capabilities and

functionings, but also can influence their preferences.

Robeyns (2017) emphasized the importance that capability approach remain

underspecified to allow for additional specifications to be made to operationalize the

approach for a particular use. In her earlier work, Robeyns (2016) referred to this open,

unspecified form as "capability approach," and uses the term "capability theory" to

describe the specific use of the capability approach to achieve a set goal. She argued

for a model which includes one universal capability approach that is broad and

multidisciplinary, and also many context or discipline specific capability theories.

Cin and Walker's (2012) study included elements of Sen's open-ended

interpretation of capability approach, but also included the development of capability

lists, an approach used by some capability approach research to combat the broad

nature of this approach. Nussbaum (2011) advocated for the construction of universal

lists of capabilities that should be available to all people as a tool to bring structure and

universality to the capability approach. By creating universal lists, this Aristotelian

approach attempted to establish a minimum definition of justice within the capability

approach.

Sen (2005) critiqued efforts to develop universal lists of capabilities for having a

lack of contextual responsiveness and also for undermining the process of public

reasoning in understanding and defining valued capabilities.   Sen acknowledged that

capabilities should be defined for a particular study or investigation, but he rejected

Nussbaum's notion of developing a universal list of capabilities. The capability

approach is necessarily open-ended, so it can be developed in a number of different

directions to serve a number of different purposes (Robeyns, 2017).

Using theory to develop static lists of capabilities that are not reflective of or

responsive to evolving social values and public reasoning is problematic (Sen, 2005);

the very fact that capability approach considers what citizens understand and value is

what makes capability approach a relevant, democratic theory. Fundamentally, the

problem with list-based approaches to measuring capabilities is the areas listed and the

weights given to different areas are arbitrary (Unterhalter, 2017). The critique of list-

based approaches is the concern that the people who have gathered the information

and formed the lists are not the same people who articulated the views "regarding what

they could or could not do and be with regard to education or gender equity" (p. 10).

Sen (2005) addressed the potential conflict of ensuring that capabilities are both

reflective of public reasoning *and* applicable across a variety of diverse cultures and

cultural values. He outlined a process for defending or rejecting claims to human rights

and the corresponding capabilities which included a wide-reaching public reasoning

process that transcends borders and cultures to capture the universalist nature of

human rights. He expanded on this idea by elucidating the ways in which differences of

opinion between countries and cultures are often reflective of less obvious or less easy

to see differences within countries and cultures. Vizard and Burchardt's (2007) study of

inequality in Britain is a primere example the use of public discourse to develop

capability lists. Their goal was to ensure that the capabilities determined by researchers

in the study were reflective of people whose capabilities were being studied, thus they

spent time carefully devising a methodology that accounted for the role of public

discourse and participant input in the development of the capabilities list that was at the

heart of their research.

Operationalizing Capability Approach

Robeyns (2016) proposed a cartwheel model to visualize an understanding of

capability approach that is appropriately broad to allow for wide application but is

precise enough in nature to bring greater definition to the approach. At the center of

this cartwheel model are the elements of capability approach that are universal

regardless of the discipline or issue at hand. Robeyns expanded on these core

characteristics of all capability approaches in her 2017 work and identified that they

include value-neutral categories, conversion factors, distinction between means and

ends, form an evaluative space, other dimensions of ultimate value, value pluralism,

and value each person. These characteristics at the core of all capability theories is

illustrated in Figure 1.
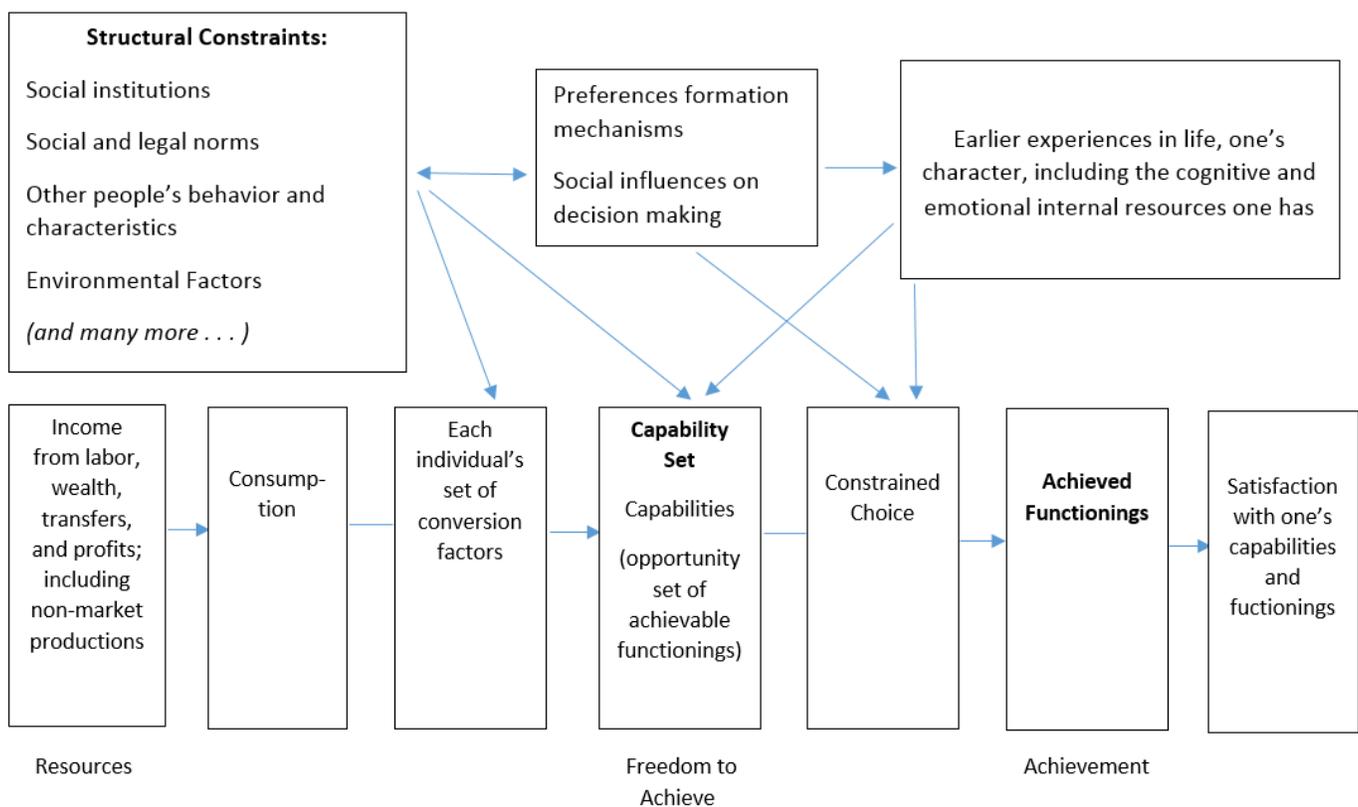
Figure 1. Core characteristics of capability theories. Adapted from Robeyns (2016).

In the cartwheel model, Robeyns (2016) included other components called modules that surround the core capabilities. She posited that these will be present in a capability approach study, though unlike the core elements which are present in all capability approach studies, the combination of modules will vary from one study to the next based on the specific capability theory at hand. The modules, represented in Figure 2, take into consideration the purpose of using the approach and include meta theoretical commitments (measurement, theory construction, etc.); ontological or explanatory theories; methods for selection of functioning and capabilities; measurement and empirical analysis; and other normative considerations.

The capability approach is a framework with potential to conceptualize and evaluate educational efforts, and one that takes into consideration the degree to which education facilitates positive social change and addresses disadvantages and inequalities (Murphy & Wolfenden, 2012). Application of capability approach to education is complex because the nature of education is innately normative and value- laden in comparison to other fields such as policy or health (Vaughan & Walker, 2012). Capability approach is grounded in how individual's values shape their capabilities, yet education is by nature a value shaping practice, thus education is a cross roads of individual and institutional values, making this field more complex to study using capability approach.
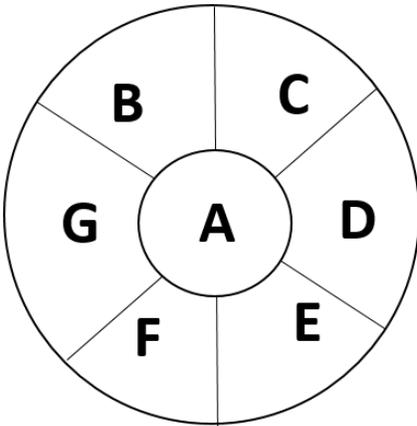
A. Core
B. Purpose
C. C. Meta-theoretical commitments
D. Social ontology and explanatory theories
E. Selection of functionings and/or capabilities, and aggregation
F. Measurement and empirical issues
G. Additional normative commitments

Figure 2. Cartwheel model of capability approach. Adapted from Robeyns (2016).

Capability Approach and Education

Vaughan and Walker (2012) conceptualized education as an active space in which individuals develop and make meaning of their *own* values and agency, not as an institution that propagates the replication of a particular set of values. Applying capability approach to education acknowledges that schooling does more than provide students with learning resources, it can be a tool for supporting the autonomy of students to ensure their ability to make meaningful choices later in life (Tikly & Barrett, 2010). Building the capabilities of individuals in education is a twofold endeavor focused on both increasing people's capabilities to access education and increasing the capabilities that people gain by being educated (Vaughan & Walker, 2012).

Yates' (2007) critique of a quantitative study regarding the impact of textbook availability on student learning in Kenya was one of the first illuminates the potential of the capability approach to enhance understanding of educational quality. It is crucial to both acknowledge the importance of these types of input-output studies and also

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recognize the limitations of this type of outcomes-based study. The capability approach allows for closer examination of the ways in which possession of a good or resource, such as textbooks in Kenya, may or may not increase functionings to achieve valued ends in regard to quality teaching and learning. Capability approach considers conversion factors, the notion that there are differences in the ability of individuals to convert resources into functionings (Robeyns, 2017).

In the example of the Kenyan textbook study Yates (2007) argued that a capability approach would have unveiled useful and actionable information regarding the book deployment by considering the teacher's ability to turn a textbook into a functioning, including the teacher's training to use textbooks effectively in multigrade settings and school or government policies regarding textbooks (can they be taken home?). Access to textbooks alone does not facilitate increased learning and capability approach offers a different evaluative space to understand the ways in which textbooks or other resources may or may not contribute to educational quality.

In the capability approach, functionings are considered value neutral, though there are some cases where functions can be universally good or bad (murder, for example), though the positive or negative nature of most functionings is more complex and can include both good and bad in their nature (Robeyns, 2017). While education is generally perceived as a force for good in developing human freedoms, capability approach leaves space for reality that educational systems can negatively impact capabilities by replicating existing inequalities, including in relation to gender and access to education (Tikly & Barrett, 2011). For example, a young female student may

be influenced by sexist practices that limit her access to all the aspects of the curriculum, which would negatively impact her capabilities.

Baxen et al. (2013) identified critiques specific to the application of capability approach as a tool for understanding educational quality, including a lack of conceptual framework regarding the essential elements of quality education, specific connections between capabilities and the processes for teaching and learning, and lack of identified core capabilities on which to focus analysis. In response, they identified six components of educational quality that are suited for evaluation using a capability approach. These include 1.) expanding the capability of learners, through content learning and other learning opportunities; 2.) accounting for conversion factors by helping learners overcome obstacles relative to their particular context; 3.) developing learners' agency by increasing self-determination and limiting oppression; 4.) valuing education as a broad tool to support human flourishing, beyond narrower view of education as a tool to increase productivity or income; 5.) focusing on individual learners by valuing quality experiences for individuals in a manner that is sensitive the context and values of individuals, not just large groups; and 6.) redefining access and rights to education by looking beyond legal rights to education towards the realities that impact educational aspects even where educational access is a legal right.

While there is still much to explore in the application of capability approach to educational quality, it is clear that capability approach has the potential to answer currently unaddressed questions in the study of educational quality, specifically questions that push beyond matters of inputs and outputs (Baxen et al., 2013). The

capability approach is now established as an important alternative lens in a number of fields, including education (Robeyns, 2017).

Capability Approach and Teachers

With so many educational development conversations focused on access to a quality education, there is actually little agreement about the elements or characteristics that define a quality education or how to best analyze of measure it (Baxen et al., 2013), but there are a number of studies that have used capability approach to address educational quality (Buckler, 2015; Cameron, 2012; Manion & Menashy, 2013; Tikly & Barrett, 2011). Furthermore, there has been some exploration of the capability model as a tool for conceptualizing teacher quality in a manner that is more teacher-centered. "The greatest barrier to teacher quality and success in reform is a lack of empathetic and realistic insights into their contexts, constraints, and mindsets; as well as a lack of teacher consultation and participation in the planning process" (Tao, 2013, p.129). Improvements in teacher quality will come when valued teacher capabilities are understood and expanded.

While many capability approach studies focus on the capabilities of learners, Buckler's (2012; 2015) work notably shifted from a focus on the capabilities of the recipients of public services to a focus on the capabilities of the public service provider his or her self. Use of this approach to address questions of teacher quality can help bring insight to persistent and vexing questions such as why teachers who have completed qualification programs, still may not be implementing the strategies they were taught during their training (Buckler, 2016).

Tao (2012) suggested the application of the capability model to understanding teachers because teachers are poised to impact the capabilities of students; teacher's capability deprivation and the degree of constraint on teachers can impact teachers and students. Her study examined teacher's working conditions and overall wellbeing as a potential factor in teacher and educational quality with the assumption that teacher's personal experiences and personal values provide an alternative and perhaps more informed understanding of teacher's personal and occupational wellbeing. Tao's study drew on previous research and documents that highlighted negative aspects of teacher practices (teacher-centered pedagogy, inadequate content knowledge, withholding content for paid tutoring) which are commonly described as being the result of "culture" or "opportunism," and she rejected these reductive explanations that didn't take into account a larger picture of the context on which teachers are working or the humanity of the teachers' themselves. Tao worked to reframe these issues by placing them within the context of teachers' work and analyzing the positive and negative nature of the functioning and capabilities of teachers in her study. Her study considered the interplay between factors impacting teacher's lives, such as poor housing, lacking school facilities, lack of materials, lack of leadership and input opportunities, and perceived low teacher motivation to create a fuller and more accurate picture of factors impacting teacher quality.

In another study of teacher quality in Tanzania, Tao (2013) identified three ways in which capability approach can address questions of teacher quality. First, it can be used as a descriptive tool for situational analysis which can reveal possible oversights which impede improvement efforts. This allows for insight into implementation gaps,

such as gaps between teacher training and teacher performance. Second, capability approach utilizes public reasoning and participant feedback to identify and expand capabilities. This allows for teacher voices and teacher on-the-ground experience to help inform capability development. Third, capability approach can also be used as a tool to monitor the ongoing development and expansion of targeted teacher capabilities.

Whereas Tao's (2012; 2013) studies primarily applied Sen's theory of capability to examining teacher's capability of wellbeing, Buckler's (2012 & 2015) studies examined teacher's capability of freedom and agency. This is a particularly rich avenue for exploration because it is increasingly clear that access to quality education results in increased freedom and agency for those individuals who are well educated. Teachers working in developing contexts, particularly those in rural areas must navigate many layers of expectation including those of the local community in which they work, the national expectations for teachers, and the international educational initiatives whose expectations are often linked to funding availability. These layers of expectation help to shape the values and freedom of practice of teachers in rural, developing contexts. Using capability approach as a lens to examine teacher quality, Buckler defined teacher quality "the successful pursuit of valued professional capabilities" (2015, p. 162). By examining teacher quality using capability approach as a lens, Buckler's (2012) research established that the capability approach allows for understanding of the dissonance between official and teacher perceptions of the role of teachers and what makes a teacher effective.

Capability approach is complex and multi-faceted, and while the application of this approach is still being defined and explored, it is an established lens with which to

explore issues related to education and teaching. The use of capability approach can facilitate deeper understanding of teaching and learning that moves beyond input and output and begins to account for complex interactions of setting, leadership, agency, and constraints on educational systems and educational outcomes.

Summary

This review of literature included in-depth information on issues relevant to rural, female teachers in developing contexts, specifically sub-Saharan Africa and Malawi. Information about the current status of education, teacher perceptions, the impact of rurality on education, and the interplay of gender and schooling presented in this chapter are all integral to the research being conducted. Additionally, this review included information about the capability approach and its suitability as a model to understand the interplay of agency and constraints in regard to teachers and their daily work. The capability approach will serve as a normative framework for analysis of the values and beliefs of teachers and the level of capability or constraint they experience in enacting those values as a practicing teacher. The information uncovered in this review points to a need for increased input from teachers in rural settings regarding education and quality of teaching.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the methods and procedures that were used to analyze the application of the capability approach to inform understanding of teacher quality in rural Malawi. The overarching question for this study was: How can the capability approach inform our understanding of teacher quality from both the perspective of educational leaders and practicing teachers? The specific research questions included: 1.) What do national educational leaders value in a quality teacher?; 2.) What do rural, Malawian, female teachers value in teaching?; 3.) How do these teachers pursue and achieve what they value in teaching?

A qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study because qualitative methods are sensitive to the daily realities and perspectives of teachers and allow for more complex analysis of teaching and learning, including the ways in which teachers' practices are consistent with local and broader socio-cultural contexts (Tikly & Barrett, 2011). While a small, qualitative study of rural teachers such as this will not produce widely generalizable information that will influence policies across whole nations or regions, this study and others like it can provide valuable insight into the actual impact of policies regarding teaching and learning as well as measurements of educational quality and educational programing (Buckler, 2011). The underpinning epistemological approach for this study was grounded in feminist theory situated within qualitative research. This study employed an approach that draws on aspects of case study and ethnographic methods.

This chapter includes information relevant to the research design, setting, participants, data collection methods, and the researcher's role. Additionally, this chapter includes information about the cross-cultural considerations for this study, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations for this work; the chapter concludes with a summary.

Research Design

This study was informed by feminist epistemology, not solely because the study was focused on female teachers, but because a feminist lens encouraged problematizing rather than simplifying issues of gender, postcolonialism, and power dynamics in order to highlight issues of equality and social justice (Cresswell, 2013). In keeping with Liambuttong's (2007) explanation of the goals of feminist research, this study used women's voices and experiences as sources of knowledge. Feminist research encouraged the researcher to have some degree of participation with research participants in the research setting to avoid objectification and to use methods that embrace collaboration and non-exploitative relationships. (Cresswell, 2013). Participatory research methods, including feminist approaches, are common in educational evaluation research and have been used with great success to study international development efforts (Patton, 2015).

Qualitative research provides contextually sensitive understandings of issues and elucidates why people do what they do (Patton, 2015). A qualitative approach to research can also capture people's stories and perspectives; it clarifies how systems function, impact people's lives, and facilitate the discovery of larger patterns and themes.

This qualitative study was structured as a mini-ethnographic case study. It was a case study because it included a specific, close study of a clearly bounded unit as the focus of the study (Merriman, 2009), in this instance, the educational processes within one clearly defined community in Malawi. In addition, this research also used elements of ethnographic methods: it considered conditions that mitigate and exacerbate disadvantage and equity, a focus of ethnographic research (Creswell, 2013); and was not focused on culture itself, but on the behaviors as well as the ideas and beliefs of a group of people within a shared culture (Wolcott, 2008), in this case, teachers. Additionally, ethnography is a good compliment for this study's emphasis on feminist approaches to research and the application of capability theory, which, like ethnography, is concerned with values and beliefs.

Ethnographic research methods honor people's subjective experiences by looking for complexity in people's views and multiple realities to aid in analysis of the established research questions (Creswell, 2013). Guba and Lincoln (2005) identified case studies as closely associated with post positivist perspectives and White, Drew, and Hay (2009) noted that post positivist case studies do not acknowledge or account for the intended and unintended influences of the researcher as compared to ethnography, which is more inclusive of the role and influence of the researcher in the research process. However, Willis (2007) posited case studies and ethnography share many similar characteristics because both seek deep and rich understanding of the topic at hand.

Ethnographic studies are focused on culture-sharing groups and while these studies often include more than 20 or 30 participants, smaller cultural groups such as a

group of a few teachers can also be the subject of an ethnographic study (Creswell, 2013). Classic ethnography includes extended time (often multiple years) to complete, which is often not feasible for student researchers or researchers with limited time or funds, which is why many researchers have employed a mini-ethnography approach (Storesund & McMurray, 2009). Fusch, Fusch, and Ness (2017) emphasized the positive benefits of blending mini-ethnography and case study approaches to research, noting that this methodological pluralism allows for the application of useful aspects of ethnography bounded within a specific case study and results in reliable data.

This study focused both on official understandings of teacher quality and on teachers' understandings of their capabilities to provide quality education. In seeking to understand this topic, the researcher will need to answer the four research questions posed in this study by examining perceptual, demographic, and theoretical information (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Information that must be gathered includes:

- perceptions of educational leaders regarding issues of teacher quality;
- teachers' perceptions of quality teaching and of their ability to achieve valued functionings in their daily work;
- demographic information about participants, including years of experience, years of training, age, ethnicity; and
- ongoing analysis of how the capability approach can inform understanding of teacher quality.

Research Contexts

This study included data collection and analysis of two specific contexts: the official context of educational leadership and educational policy in Malawi and the

teacher context of daily life working in a rural school in Malawi. Both contexts were

necessary to address the stated research questions. The research in the official context

addressed the first research question, whereas the teacher context helped address the

final two research questions.

Official Context: Educational Leadership

The official context was concerned with the larger field of educational policy that

impacts education in rural Malawian communities. This research was not focused on

the impact of any one specific policy, but rather in understanding the values and

capabilities that are important within the holistic body of education policies. This data

was collected through document review and semi-structured interviews with educational

leaders at primary schools, secondary schools, school zone leaders, and teacher

training college staff. The participant selection approach for this context was grounded

in the idea of key informants, explained by Patton (2015) as individuals who have

expertise, history, and experience with the specialized topic of focus.

Additional data about the official context was collected via review of documents

regarding the official understanding of quality teaching. Documents included in the

review range from teacher expectations as posted at various school sites, school

improvement initiatives, teacher guidance documents, teacher observation rubrics, and

guidelines for national educational programs. Data collection regarding the official

context supported analysis of the first research question posed in this study.

Educational Leadership Settings

The data used to address the research question regarding the official context

included interviews with school leaders within the same educational zone in which

teachers were interviewed. These interviews included the Primary Education Advisor who supervised all schools in the zone, the head teacher of school site 4, the deputy head teacher of school site 1, and the head teachers of two secondary schools located in the zone. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the president of a teacher training college and a member of the faculty at the University of Malawi, both educational leaders working outside the school zone where the teachers were interviewed. Additional data regarding the official context was collected via review of educational documents.

Teacher Context

The research site for investigating the teacher context was a community in the central region of Malawi. In choosing a research site for school-based field work, the researcher was seeking a location that met the UN definition of rural, yet also had nearby housing available for the researcher during fieldwork, included schools with a head teacher who would support the study, contained female teachers willing to participate in the study, and had schools that were relatively representative of average schools in Malawi. Data collected at this site was used to inform research questions two and three: What do rural, Malawian, female teachers value in teaching? And, how do these teachers pursue and achieve what they value in teaching?

Selection of participants for the teacher context was done with a purposeful eye towards identifying typical cases; participant recruitment included an element of network or chain sampling, in which initial participants were asked to identify other possible candidates (Patton, 2015). Local community leaders who agreed to act as gatekeepers for this study and the head teachers at each school site were instrumental in recruiting

teacher participants with the criteria the head teacher views the teacher participant as typical for the school, the teacher is proficient in written and spoken English, and the teacher teaches classes in English for at least one period a day. Although all teachers were situated in the same wider community, efforts were made to include a modicum of variation in participants in regard to demographic attributes, such as age, years of experience, and educational backgrounds, to provide a fuller picture of a variety of experiences. Participants were drawn from four school sites within the single school zone. The availability and interest of teachers, as well as the size of the schools and corresponding teaching force was a deciding factor in the final number of participants from each school. The study included 15 teacher participants; initially, 16 participants agreed to participate, but one teacher chose not to continue in the study beyond the initial interview and observation.

School Settings

The study was conducted in the central region of Malawi in the final trimester of the 2017 - 2018 school year. The academic year began in September and ended in July and operated on a 12-week trimester calendar. In the district where the study was conducted, the supply of schools and teachers at the primary level includes an average of 766 students per school, average of 75 students per teacher; at the secondary level, this district has an average of 257 students per school and 24 students per teacher (Omoeva & Moussa, 2016). In the area in which the study was conducted, about 35% of schools have a high need for teachers which means the school is in need of more than five teachers to reach the desired student to teacher ratio of 60 to 1 and 25% of schools have a need for teachers, meaning the school needs two to five teachers to

achieve the desired ratio (DeStefano, 2013). Thirty percent of schools have two to five teachers more than needed to meet the ratio and 10% of schools have more than five teachers above what is required.

In the central region of Malawi where the study was conducted, there were 4,135 female teachers as compared to 7,318 male teachers in primary schools; this was the highest gender disparity in teachers of any division in Malawi (MoEST, 2015). The regions with the smallest gender disparities between male and female teachers were the least rural districts. Additionally, the central Malawi region had more permanent classrooms than any other education division (MoEST, 2015).

Four primary schools from a single zone were included in this study. The zone contains one larger trading center town at the center of the zone, with a population of about 7,000 people. Trading centers are located on or directly adjacent to a paved road and generally have basic shops and businesses in addition to daily open marketplaces. The remainder of the zone consists of small villages with population of less than 1,000 a few kilometers from one another in densely populated yet rural areas with no significant roads or infrastructure. While none of the schools in the study were considered urban, two of the schools were located adjacent to the trading center and two schools were in smaller villages farther from the trading center.

All four of the school sites had school timetables that reflected student arrival time at 7:30, with a period of time for students to clean the classrooms and school yard before beginning class at or near 8:00 and those same timetables reflected the school day ending at 12:30 for infant standards, 1:00 for juniors, and 1:30 for seniors. Though the timetables were precisely designed, the researcher observed significant variances in

those schedules at all school sites. Teacher absences, a funeral, or an exam could result in a shortened day or no classes for the day; these decisions were fluid and made as the school day progressed. Class periods were 30 minutes long with 5 minutes between classes and a longer break in the midmorning. Nine subjects are taught at all public schools in Malawi: English, Chichewa, maths, science, religious studies, expressive arts, life skills, agriculture, and social studies. Some classes, such as English, Chichewa, and maths, are taught daily or sometimes two times a day while other classes, such as expressive arts of agriculture, are taught just once or twice a week.

The classes are blocked throughout the day to facilitate the sharing of classroom spaces, so classes sometimes had a 30 minute block 'off,' during which they do not have any class for that period, thus it was common to see many students playing, walking together, and sitting in groups around the school campus and the areas adjacent to the school throughout the day. There was no provision for substitute teachers so when a teacher was absent the class either combined with another teacher's class (if available) or the class did not meet that period or that day. The researcher did not observe any instances when a teacher who had an open block would substitute for a class or subject area they did not teach.

Though all schools varied in the quality and condition of the classrooms buildings, the campuses and classrooms were very similar overall. No school sites had electricity and most had some type of borehole or pump nearby as a water source in addition to separate pit toilets for boys, girls, and teachers. Also common to all schools was the implementation of the national curriculum. Though the number of student

textbooks and teacher manuals varied from site to site, all of the courses, content, and textbooks were the same and these same resources were used in the teacher preparation programs.

Some students wore school uniforms, though it was not a requirement at any of the school sites. Many students carried some kind of plastic shopping bag, satchel, or piece of fabric tied around then containing composition books, pens, and text books for school. Though some students had sweaters or jackets and a snack with them, it was most common for students to wear short sleeves and shorts or skirts despite the cool morning temperatures. It was common for students to express feeling cold and hungry while at school.

All school sites included some degree of teacher housing. Teacher houses were adjacent to the school campuses and were generally small, two-room houses made of brick with concrete floors, thatch roofs, and no electricity or running water. None of the schools had enough teacher housing available for all faculty, though the two more rural schools had more teacher houses available than the school in town. Teachers receive the same monthly salary regardless of whether they are allocated teacher housing, so teachers who are not assigned housing incur more costs that those who do, as the teacher has to pay rent. Also, some teachers indicated that they did not wish to be assigned to teacher housing because the quality of housing was low; these teachers preferred to pay for housing with more amenities.

School Site 1

School 1 was located in near the trading center with classrooms on either side of a dust road which had fairly constant traffic throughout the day in the form of

pedestrians and bikes with intermittent cars and ox carts.   Many of the classrooms

were newly refurbished, giving the campus a tidy and well-cared for appearance. The

school was associated with the nearby Catholic church and students played and talked

in groups around the school buildings, in the churchyard, and the adjacent football and

netball fields throughout the day. The majority of the classroom buildings formed a U-

shape around a central courtyard which contained a large bell to signal the start and

end of school as well as the change of classes, a table where teachers sat on their

breaks, a small garden area, and open space where children played.

The classrooms and other school spaces consisted of ten detached, one-story

brick buildings most of which contained two classrooms. The school had a total of 16

classrooms; in addition, there was an office for the head teacher, a small classroom

used for special needs teaching, a mostly empty room with shelves on the wall with

some books, and a brand-new, as well as a science lab space and a library that were

both newly constructed and completely empty. The science lab and the library were the

only observed by the researcher at any primary schools in this area and though these

were built the previous year, they had yet to be used by teachers or students because

they contained no equipment or materials.

Classrooms were large, cemented-walled or brick rooms with a single door

leading directly outside. The buildings adjacent to the main courtyard had all been

recently updated by a local construction business who heeded the government's

directive that local businesses should donate services to support improvements of

primary schools in their community. These buildings were by far the nicest classrooms

observed by the researcher while visiting primary schools in Malawi. With open

windows covered by wrought iron grates, these classrooms were considerably more well-lit then other classrooms observed during the research.

The classroom buildings across the street were not included in last year's improvements and these classrooms did not have desks or chairs for students, were much darker due to the small windows made with brick cut outs, the walls were dingy and covered with watermarks, and the plaster on the walls was uneven and coming apart in some areas. These classrooms were very dim and sometimes, it was difficult to see teacher presentation materials from the back of the room.

No classrooms or parts of the school included electricity. All classrooms had a chalkboard at the front of the room and teachers regularly used large sheets of easel paper to make anchor charts, many of which were taped to the classroom walls. Classroom floors were cement, and the floors in the older classrooms were cracked and crumbling in some places. The refurbished classrooms had wooden desks and benches; usually enough of them to accommodate all the students, though the older classrooms had no furniture and students sat on the cement floor for lessons. There were a number of pit toilets behind the school for boys and girls, all were brick, vented structures, almost all with working doors and in relatively good condition. There was no bathhouse, well, or running water near the bathrooms for handwashing or sanitation.

The deputy head teacher indicated that as part of a new national grant program, three "shelter" or "temporary" classrooms would be added to the back side of the courtyard overlooking the mountains the next year and there was evidence of construction of these shelters after final exams were completed. The temporary classrooms would have low brick walls about waist-high and posts to hold up a metal

roof over each structure. These shelters would provide the opportunity to offer more

classrooms sections and reduce the class sizes without incurring the full cost of building

a classroom.

With 35 teachers and more than 1700 students, the school has a student to

teacher ratio of 49:1. According to Asim et al. (2017) this school was overstaffed; this

fits with findings that schools closer to trading centers and cities often are fully staffed or

overstaffed compared to schools in smaller villages or more remote areas. Also, the

majority of the teachers at this school were female, including deputy head, which is very

unusual given prevalence of male teachers on a national scale, however, the head

teacher indicated that it was not unusual to have many female teachers at this particular

school due to the number of women who requested a transfer in order to work in the

same location as their husbands and many of the teachers' husbands were teachers at

the nearby secondary school, police, employed in the trading center, or business

owners.

Despite the higher number of teachers, students are divided into just 16 classes

so that each class has a classroom in which they can meet. Typical class size was

around 120, with observed class sizes ranging from 88 to more than 170. Given the

higher number of teachers, multiple teachers were assigned to each class meaning that

the teacher specializes in certain subjects and does not teach all the subjects. For

example, a teacher might teach English and social studies to a Standard 2 class, while

other teachers come in to teach that class to teach other subjects. It was common to

see groups of six to ten teachers sitting together outside throughout the school day,

since at this school it was typical for three teachers to share responsibility for teaching

various subjects to a given class. They were actively teaching two- or three-hour half-hour class periods per day.

The office for the Primary Education Advisor (PEA), the supervisor of the schools in the zone, was also located at this school site. Behind the school along the road between the school and the Catholic church, the PEA's office had also been redone and repainted as part of the efforts to improve the school. This office included the PEA and his secretary (a young man who was also a qualified primary school teacher) and the PEA typically traveled throughout the zone by motorbike. There were more than a dozen schools in the zone, and the PEA was observed working with the head teachers at two of the research sites during the field research period.

School Site 2

School site 2 was also located near the trading center, less than a kilometer from school site 1. The school had 1,433 students, 30 teachers, and 6 student teachers and was located on a dust road with regular foot and bicycle traffic adjacent to a nearby secondary school campus. The school was associated with the Presbyterian church across the street and the campus consisted of five buildings organized around a center courtyard with each building containing two classrooms, in addition to an office space for the head of school. All but one of the buildings were old and in disrepair. One of the classroom blocks was newer, but in most, the bricks in the windows had been eaten away by termites and were disintegrating, the concrete floors in the classrooms were worn and cracked with fissures and craters where the dirt and dust came through the school floor. The majority of classrooms did not have desks or chairs, leaving the students to sit on the floor.

None of the school's facilities included electricity or glass windows. The campus did include some vented pit toilets and some older pit toilets without vents. There was one borehole for water on campus that was reserved for use by teachers, no water source was available for students.

With 1,433 students and 30 teachers, the student to teacher ratio at this school was about 48:1, which is well below the government goal of 60 to 1. The government would consider this school to be overstaffed. However, all but one of the classes observed by the researcher were larger than 70 students because the classes are organized into large groups and a team of teachers are assigned to that class. For example, in Standards 1 and 3, two teachers were present with groups of 60 to 75 students; one teacher would teach a few subjects and then watch while the other teacher taught a few other subjects. In the older grades, it was more common for the teacher who was not teaching that class period to sit at a teacher break table outside than to remain in the classroom. There were about 14 classrooms available at the school site.

Several classes met outside in the shade of the trees with the students sitting on the ground because no classroom space was available for these groups. The teacher reported that during rainy weather they combine with another section of students from the same standard, and then there are about 140 to 150 students in one room. Also, teacher absences sometimes resulted in the combining of already large classes, resulting in groups of students of 130 to 170. In those instances, the combined classes would also meet outside because the whole group could not comfortably fit into a single classroom. Just prior to the research period, the Standard 3 class had been meeting in

a building connected to the church across the street, but the church walls have too many cracks in them and the building had been deemed unsafe, so they had to relocate back to the school campus causing more classes to have to meet outdoors and increasing overcrowding in rooms during the rainy season.

When the classes met outside, there was not any kind of tangible or intangible boundary around them, so students on break or people walking by would go directly next to the class or though the class. Children played and called to one another even when they are very near the class.

The school had six student teachers and the student teachers were given their own section to teach together. Their supervising teachers explained the emphasis for student teaching is on independent practice and it is common practice for student teachers to manage their own class together.

Several participants from this site mentioned their frustration at the rehabilitation and improvements that had been completed nearby at school site 1, while this school remained in disrepair with very few classrooms. It seems each school has a community committee responsible for the school campus maintenance and development; various community members stated that the community committee at this school was not working well or efficiently. This may account for some of the differences in school infrastructure between this school and the nearby site 1 school.

At the end of each period, the head teacher or a student would hit a stick against a wheel well hanging from a tree to signal the class change. The school was organized, and the student break times and overall schedule seemed more streamlined and understandable than the first site's schedule. Though after about 11:00 it seemed that

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the schedule got more confusing, perhaps due to the staggered ending to the school day for different aged students. The school structures, schedules and routine were much easier to observe and understand here, as compared to other schools where bells might ring, but it wasn't always apparent what the bell was signaling or meaning to signal, as classes would continue and students playing would continue.

School Site 3

This school was located near a rural village about 5 km from the trading center with no sealed roads along the way. The countryside was more sparsely populated between the trading center and the village, with very few businesses or major settlements. There were no signs of electricity anywhere in this area and there were almost no cars on the road, however there was constant traffic in the form of bicyclists, pedestrians, and some motorcyclists. The school campus was adjacent to a small village with one or two businesses, a small group of homes, and a Catholic church with which the school was associated.

The school campus consisted of a small courtyard with four blocks equaling eight classrooms and one office space. There was a large football pitch near the road in front of the school. The classroom blocks were older and worn. The block where the Standard 5 class is located was smaller classrooms than any seen elsewhere, and desks were only present in Standards 6, 7, and 8 where the class sizes were small. The younger standard classes were at least twice as large as the older standard classes. In one classroom, there was a five-foot diameter hole in the cement floor in the middle of the room, making a large section of the classroom space unusable. The classrooms were sparse, with most having just one desk available to serve as the

teacher's desk.   There were also two teacher houses located behind the school in the

opposite direction of the latrines.

The ten teachers assigned to the school were allocated to two sections of

Standard 1 and two teachers assigned to a single Standard 8 class; beyond that,

Standards 2 through 7 had one section with one teacher, so teachers at this school

were more likely to teach all the subjects to their class as opposed to the first two

schools where multiple teachers were assigned to share the teaching load for each

class section. The monthly enrollment chart reflected an average of about 600

students. Overall, this school fell under the national definition of adequately staffed

because the overall pupil to teacher ratio was 60 to 1. However, monthly enrollment

varied throughout the school year, sometimes fluctuating as much as 100 more or 100

fewer students from one month to the next. The head teacher identified the need for

children to help with farming chores and lack of available food during the dry season as

reasons for low attendance during different times of the year. Previously, the school

had served only infants and juniors, but the school had become a full primary school

serving Standards 1 through 8 about three years prior to this research.

The majority of the teachers at this school lived in or nearer to the nearby trading

center and commuted to the school. Most biked 20 - 25 minutes or walked 45 – 60

minutes to get to school. Curiously, some of the teachers reported receiving the rural

allowance and others reported they did not. All but two of the female teachers lived in

the trading center and biked or took a bike taxi or moto taxi to the school. The other two

female teachers lived in teacher houses on the school campus, though overall, the

teachers found this housing to be undesirable because the houses were in poor

condition and there was no access to electricity. None of the female teachers were from this village and none were from the trading center; all had been posted to this site from other places.

Classes at this school were relatively small; the largest class observed was 68 students. The teachers shared that attendance is poor earlier in the mornings during cold weather and the dry season, such as during the research period because families lack food and warmer clothing. The Primary Education Advisor for the zone indicated that next year this school will be included in the school feeding programs run by a non-governmental organization, so a porridge would be served free to all students during the first break of the school day. The head teacher indicated that the community intended to add more teacher housing to the school next year and three to four temporary classroom shelters would be built as part of the new national grant program.

School Site 4

This school was northwest of the trading center and was located about 15 kilometers from a sealed road. Traveling from the trading center to the school there were only a handful of commercial establishments and a few community buildings, mostly churches. Though the buildings were sparse in many areas, the dust roads from the trading center to the village had consistent foot and bike traffic and there were thatched roof houses all along the way; the car hired by the researcher was the only one observed while travelling to and from the village. The school was not near a noticeable village or settlement, though it was next to a Presbyterian church, with which the school was affiliated.

This school had a total of 12 teachers and monthly attendance totals indicated the school enrollment fluctuated from 1000 to 1,150 students, creating a student to teacher ratio of about 95 students per teacher. By national definition, this school had a high need for teachers, meaning more than five additional teachers were needed to achieve a student to teacher ratio of 60:1. It is also important to note there were just 2 female teachers on staff at this school.

As with the other schools, this school had no electricity and brick classroom blocks with two classrooms per block. The school consisted of five blocks with a total of 10 classrooms. One of the classrooms was used as the head teacher's office, and the nine other rooms served as classrooms. The school had about 250 students in Standard 1, 145 in Standard 2, 190 in Standard 3, 130 in Standard 4, 165 in Standard 5; the senior classes were noticeably smaller with 100 in Standard 6, 55 in Standard 7, and 60 in Standard 8. Standard 1 was divided into two sections with one teacher assigned to each section, while Standards 2 through 7 had 1 section with one teacher assigned to teach all courses. Despite the small number of students, Standard 8 had three teachers assigned to that section.

The five classroom blocks were laid out around a common space with a netball football pitches behind two of the blocks. Behind the netball pitch were at least eight staff houses; these were brick structures with thatched roofs and a borehole nearby designated for staff as well as two designated toilets away from the student facilities. There were 8 toilets for students behind two of the blocks and a borehole for students to use near the church. Staff houses were made from mud bricks with two small rooms, thatched roofs, glass windows, concrete floors in poor condition, and a small supply of

electricity run through a single solar panel system, though the teachers reported that this solar power system did not often work.

Data Collection Methods

Triangulation of information from a variety of sources is essential in gaining depth of understanding regarding a research topic and adds breadth, depth, and rigor to the understanding of the topic at hand (Denzin et al., 2013). It is important to identify, understand and explore consistent and inconsistent information across data sources, and triangulation is a technique that can help to analyze multiple data sources in consideration of one another to gain deeper insight into important research questions (Patton, 2015). Therefore, this study included several different data collection methods for each of the research contexts, including interviews, observation, focus groups, and document reviews.

Data from the Official Context

In the official research context, data were collected from interviews with educational leaders as well as from document reviews. The interviews were semi-structured and about one hour in length. An interview guide allowed for the topics to be outlined prior to the interview, but also provided flexibility to determine the sequence and wording during the interview, which allowed for increased responsiveness to the interviewees as well as flexibility to increase the comprehensiveness of the interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in a location designated by the participant. The focus was on presenting relevant, open-ended questions and allowing participants maximum time to respond while limiting comments and advice from the researcher (Creswell, 2013).

Another data collection method this study used to answer question one regarding the official context of the research was document review. Marshall and Rossman (2006) stated that review of documents increases the researcher's knowledge of the history and context of relevant issues. Additionally, document review of print and electronic media can reveal further avenues of questioning, supply supplementary research data, aid in tracking changes and development over time, and verify evidence from other sources (Bowen, 2009). Documents from a variety of sources, on a variety of topics, and for a variety of audiences were included in this data:

- documents written by the government or national education leaders regarding the roles and responsibilities of teachers,

- documents written by school leaders about the role of teachers,

- documents identifying the role of education in national development,

- documents written about teachers by international development agencies, and

- documents written about teachers for the national public.

These documents were collected from a variety of sources, including the school sites, resource centers, government organizations, non-governmental organizations, and individuals.

Data from the Teacher Context

In the teacher context, the researcher also collected data using multiple methods to allow for triangulation. These methods included interviews, observation, and focus groups.

Interviews with teacher participants included both semi-structured interviews and unstructured, informal interviews. The researcher conducted two semi-structured interviews with each teacher participant; including career and life history interviews which employed an interview guide aimed at uncovering the career history and professional life narratives of the teachers (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) and another interview guide was developed to elicit information from participants regarding their working conditions and what each teacher values in her work. Chenail (2011) advocated for the use of interview protocols as a tool for mitigating bias and preventing researcher from unknowingly pushing interviewees towards predetermined conclusions (Fusch et al., 2017). All interviews were transcribed, and interview elaboration notes were added to aide in reflection and the development of ideas (Patton, 2015). Efforts were made to ensure that teacher interviews took place in a setting that was comfortable and empowering for the participants, including in the teachers' classrooms or other setting of the participants choice.

The researcher also had incidental opportunities to spend informal interview time with teachers throughout the course of the fieldwork, in keeping with goal of spending as much time as is available and appropriate to informally speak with teachers about their experiences, including incidental times such as walking to and from school, mealtimes, or at community events. The goal was to have as much contact time as possible with the teachers while maintaining sensitivity to their needs and circumstances. Informal interviews did not include predetermined questions or topics but derived from conversation in a natural context which can be an important source of information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In addition, informal interviews provided

the researcher with opportunities to gain clarification for field notes, observations, and reflective journals (Fusch et al., 2017).   Whereas semi structured interviews were always recorded, informal interviews were rarely recorded, but were documented via field notes.

Observational data from classroom visits were also collected and provided the opportunity to make in-depth descriptions of the setting, activities, people, and understand meaning of what was observed from the perspective of those being observed (Patton, 2015). Observations of students were incidental to the research; no students were interviewed, and no student work samples or student-specific information was part of this analysis. Observations took place primarily in the school setting. Observation, or shadowing, allows the researcher to better understand the context and peoples' interactions, which leads to a more holistic perspective (Patton, 2015). Naturalistic observation of teaching and learning, as well as the lives of teachers in the community being studied. Observation in the classroom was focused on the actions of the teachers and was used as a source of data to contribute to the values and beliefs of teachers. No observations were focused on students and no student data or personal information were collected. Thick description resulting from these observations included information such as class size, classroom and school environment, available resources for teaching and learning, teaching strategies employed, and teacher interaction with stakeholders.

Observation notes and fieldnotes are often a combination of descriptive, inferential, and evaluative responses and require a systematic approach to ensure quality data is captured (Ravitvh & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016). The process for writing field

notes indicates researchers should jot down notes while in the field, then turn these rough notes into more developed field notes which should be done relatively soon after the initial notes and observations are made (Emerson, Frentz, & Shaw, 2011). These procedures were followed to develop field notes from classroom observations and informal interactions with teachers.

Researcher's Role

Creswell (2013) noted that observers have various degrees of involvement in regard to what they observe, ranging from complete participant, in which the observer is fully engaged in what s/he is observing, to complete observer, in which the researcher is not seen or noticed by the participants. In this study, the researcher's role fell in the middle of those two extremes, with the researcher moving between some participation and no participation; the researcher participated in some aspects of life within the setting of the research but was not a full participant.

Cross Cultural Considerations

Sensitivity to and respect for people's cultural differences and worldviews is essential in qualitative research regardless of the research setting, but it is especially important in cross-cultural studies (Patton, 2015). Differences in language, cultural norms, and values can significantly increase the possibility of misunderstandings and miscommunication, particularly in short-term studies in international settings. Rapid appraisals in cross-cultural settings, common in international development efforts, are not grounded in ethnographic approaches of in-depth observation, relationship building, and long-term exposure are more prone to cross-cultural mistranslations, therefore,

researchers engaged in these studies must be sensitized to possible missteps in qualitative data collection (Patton, 2015).

Another consideration in this study is language. English is the formal language of schooling and business in Malawi and is a remnant of colonization. English is not commonly spoken in casual conversation. All participants in this study completed a secondary school leaving certificate, indicating proficiency in English, but it should be noted that participants were not speaking in their first language may have affected the nature of their responses in interviews. Face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to rephrase or clarify questions as needed to accurately capture the thoughts of the participants and increase the trustworthiness of the data (Mtika & Gates, 2011).

Researchers must acknowledge the interviewees' perception of the researcher affects what information is shared and how it is shared with that researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This study included five weeks of immersive fieldwork in which the researcher lived and participated in the community being studied. Though this timeframe was limited, the hope was to create enough exposure to the local culture to build relationships within and an understanding of the community to transcend some of the obstacles to clear communication and understanding. Additionally, the researcher was aware of what Patton (2015) identified as common variables that can vary significantly in different cultural settings such as timeliness, eye contact, physical proximity, nonverbal communication, gender issues, and appropriate topics for inquiry and has prior experience navigating these elements in a number of different cultural settings.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Sometimes used interchangeably with 'validity,' its counterpart term from the quantitative research tradition, trustworthiness speaks to the overall quality and rigor of a study (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016). The trustworthiness of qualitative data is grounded in attention to four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016).

Credibility is concerned with the degree to which the researcher is clearly and accurately representing the perceptions of participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Credibility is enhanced in a study by attending to the development of strong practices for data collection and ensuring that the data reflects rather than simplifies complexities inherent in the topic(s) at hand (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016). Credibility is addressed by ensuring continuity between how participants describe their lives and how accurately researchers represent that information (Patton, 2015). The inclusion opportunities for teachers to verify the researcher's perceived capabilities and constraints enhanced the credibility of the data in this study.

Although qualitative researchers generally recognize their research findings may not be generalizable to other settings, as stated about this study earlier in this work, it is likely that others can learn from the information uncovered in a particular research setting (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This is referred to as transferability and in qualitative research this can be fostered through the use of research practices such as thick description, and rich description of the data collected (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016) which are in place in the methodology of this study.

Dependability is concerned with the degree to which the study procedures and analysis are transparent and replicable (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Efforts were made to ensure this study's procedures were clear and repeatable by articulating the rationale for research design choices and including triangulation of data, both of which enhance research dependability (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016).

For the study to be considered trustworthy, the data and its interpretation must be shown to be free from unacknowledged bias (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016) ; this quality is referred to as confirmability. Qualitative researchers accept the existence of bias in interpretation of data but require this bias to be identified and named to allow for consideration of how this bias may impact research. Research with a high degree of confirmability will link findings, analysis, and interpretations to actual data points (Patton, 2015). This study will employ several rounds of coding to ensure the findings are truly represented in the raw data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations regarding research practices must be a consideration in each stage of this research study. Research design must reflection ethical practices regarding disclosure, voluntary participation, informed consent, risks to participants, privacy, and confidentiality (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Ethical issues should be a focus of researchers' work during data collection and processing as well as during writing and reporting (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the researcher submitted written proposals to and obtain permission from the Centre for Education and Research at the University of Malawi's School of Education and the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University prior to collecting any research data. Review of research

procedures by both organizations ensured that the research design and planned

research practices reflected ethical practices for research involving human participants.

Consent

All participants signed consent forms that outlined the rights of each participant

and the responsibilities of the researcher, as well as the expectations of participants.

Included among participant rights is the right of participants to refuse to participate, to

withdraw at any time, or to modify their participation. All study participants were

proficient in written and spoken English at a post-secondary school level, so all consent

forms and information were presented in English. The consent form clearly outlined the

benefits of participation such as contributing to educational development, as well as

risks to participants, including possible loss of confidentiality. In addition to consent

forms, the researcher made available to participants a condensed informational flyer

about the study to introduce teachers to the study and recruit participants.   The study

included 15 teacher participants and 7 educational leader participants. Initially, 16

participants agreed to participate, but one teacher chose not to continue in the study

beyond the initial interview and observation.

Access

While finding entree into a community and building rapport are important aspect

of qualitative design, Ravitch and Mittenfelner Carl (2016) emphasized the importance

of research relationships before, during, and after fieldwork, not just initial contact. This

was considered intentionally in light of issues ranging from setting, social identities,

research roles, and power dynamics so that the relational stance of the researcher is

formed by intentional design rather than default. Access to this research site was

facilitated by the directors of a local non-profit organization who were also a member of the local community. The support of these gatekeepers in establishing connections and credibility in the local community was invaluable.

During the field research in this study, the researcher strived to live as similarly as the teachers as possible to enhance understanding life in the community and to express commitment to understanding the teachers' lives and context. The researcher lived in secondary teacher housing within the community, traveled by foot or by public transportation as much as possible, and avoided staying in hotels or traveling by private vehicle. By living in teacher housing and being present in the daily life of the community, the researcher had complex interactions with the community and her presence likely had an impact on the community that were difficult for her to observe and understand. Having a female researcher likely facilitated more open access to female teachers as she may have been viewed in a less authoritarian manner, which would impact interactions and conversations with the research participants.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a key concept in ethnographic research and while it can be interpreted by some as giving back to participants via payment or favors in an effort to build mutuality, it is important to consider a more critical approach to reciprocity in qualitative research (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016). Good research practices should consider what researchers take from participants and what they provide in return and the rights and responsibilities of both researchers and participants (Crow, 2008). Crow illuminated ways that researchers can provide reciprocal support to participants for their time and thought, some of which will be employed in this study, including the

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ethical treatment of data in regard to confidentiality and anonymity, open opportunities

to share important aspects of their lives, contextually appropriate affirmation of

experience, and creating an opportunity for participants to have a voice in the public

sphere if that is what they desire. Acts of reciprocity connected to exchange funds or

resources can have unintended negative consequences (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl,

2016) and were not be employed in this study.

Anonymity

The consent forms for this research could not guarantee absolute anonymity to

study participants because even identifying the general region of Malawi that is the

setting for the teacher context combined with the extended presence of a stranger in

that school community for the duration of the fieldwork could make the study setting,

and possibly the participants identifiable. However, strong efforts were made to keep

the data as confidential as possible.   Steps taken to maintain data confidentiality

included removing participant names and other possible identifiers from interview

transcripts and other analyzed documents as well as demographic data. Research

materials were housed offline on an encrypted device.

Data Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data is a process of narrowing down a large body of

collected data using a process that identifies significant patterns in data in a manner

that reveals a framework that can be used to communicate the fundamental findings

revealed in the data (Patton, 2015). Data analysis in qualitative research is a cyclical

process in which data is reviewed and analyzed throughout the data collection process

and early data impacts the researcher's decisions regarding data collected moving

forward in the study (Ravitch & Mittenfeller Carl, 2016). This type of integrative

approach to data analysis requires the researcher to use formative data analysis to

shape further data collection, triangulate data across various sources to see

connections and discontinuity, and use self-reflection and collaboration to question

analysis.

The researcher transcribed and pre-coded all research data, and once a greater

body of data was collected, the data underwent multiple readings to facilitate coding

data and establishing major themes. The data was then re-read and re-coded with the

established themes. Salient quotes from participants were sorted and categorized as

well.

Summary

This chapter has situated this research in qualitative research practices and

explained the feminist epistemology as well as the case study and ethnographic

research approaches that will be used. In addition, the chapter has described the

research setting, outlined two specific contexts or settings for the research, the methods

that will be used in each context. In addition, this chapter has addressed the role of the

researcher in the study, issues of trustworthiness, and how various ethical

considerations related to this study were managed. The next chapter presents the data

that was collected using the procedures explained here.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The primary question of this research study was "How can the capability

approach inform our understanding of teacher quality from both the perspective of

educational leaders and practicing teachers." This chapter presents key findings from

analysis of data collected through teacher interviews, classroom observations,

educational leader interviews, and a review of national and international policy and

guidance documents related to teaching and teacher quality in order to determine the

valued capabilities of teachers from both the perspective of educational leaders and

teachers. This chapter also includes analysis of the degree to which valued capabilities

and their corresponding functionings could be pursued and achieved by female, primary

teachers in a community in central Malawi.

The first section of this chapter is focused on the first research question posed in

this work: What do national educational leaders value in a quality teacher? This

includes an overview of the findings about the official roles of teachers as understood

through review of official documents and analysis of interviews with Malawian

educational leaders.

The next sections address the second and third research questions posed in this

study: What do rural, Malawian, female teachers value in teaching? and, How do these

teachers pursue and achieve what they value in teaching? These sections contain key

information about the teacher participants, their background and history, as well as their

key professional values. The chapter ends with an analysis of the agency and

constraints that impact each teacher's capacity to achieve their valued capabilities.

<p align="center">*Research Question 1*</p>

Valued Capabilities from the Official Context

The first research question addressed in this study was "What do national

educational leaders value in a quality teacher?" To answer this question, data were

collected via interviews with educational leaders and a review of official documents

focused on teaching and teachers in Malawi.   The documents reviewed included those

written by school leaders about the role of teachers, documents identifying the role of

education in national development, documents written about teachers by international

development agencies, and documents written about teachers for the national public.

With all documents and interview transcripts, thematic coding was completed with a

focus on identifying educational values that were common across the interviews and

documents in order to develop a set of valued capabilities that represented the "official"

view of teacher quality. This was achieved through a process of open coding all

interview transcripts and identified documents, followed by axial coding to determine

dominant themes. Table 1 includes a comprehensive list of documents included in the

analysis.   Table 2 includes information about the education leader interviewees whose

interviews were included in the analysis for this research question.

Table 1. List of documents used for analysis of the official context.

Document	Title	Year	Author(s)	Intended Audience
Doc1	Malawi Primary Education: English Teacher's Guide for Standard 1	2016	Malawi Institute for Education, the Ministry of Education	Pre-service and in-service primary school teachers in Malawi
Doc2	School Anti-Violence Statement	2018	Ministry of Education & Girls Empowerment Network	Students, parents, & community members
Doc3	Rules and Regulations of the Teaching Profession	2016	Ministry of Education	Teachers
Doc4	Student Rules and Regulations	2016	Primary Education Advisor	Students, teachers, & parents
Doc 5	School-Based Continuous Professional Development Cycle	2017	Ministry of Education	Educational leaders, teachers, & community members
Doc7	Site 3 School Vision & Mission Statement	2016	School 3 Stakeholders	Students, teachers, parents, & community members
Doc8	STD 1 Teacher Training Facilitator's Guide	2017	Malawi Institute of Education	Teacher trainers
Doc9	Site 2 School Service Charter	2016	Head Teachers	Students, teachers, parents, & community members
Doc11	Site 2 School Vision & Mission Statement	2016	School 2 Stakeholders	Students, teachers, parents, & community members
Doc13	Goals of Education in Malawi	2012	Ministry of Education	Citizens of Malawi
Doc15	National Reading Panel: Training Manual for Chichewa Standard 1	2016	Malawi Institute of Education	In-service and preservice teachers
Doc16	National Education Sector Plan 2008-2017	2008	Ministry of Education	All education stakeholders
Doc17	EFA Global Monitoring Report: 2013/14	2014	UNESCO	International education development community
Doc18	Basic Education Sector Report	2012	International Development Center of Japan	International education development community

Doc 19	Education Sector Implementation Plan II 2013/14 - 2017/18	2014	The Government of Malawi	Development organizations & Malawi educational leaders
Doc20	Girls' Primary and Secondary Education in Malawi: Sector Review Final Report	2017	Ministry of Education and UNICEF	Development organizations & Malawi educational leaders
Doc21	National Education Policy	2013	Ministry of Education	Development organizations & Malawi educational leaders

Table 2. Educational leader participants from the official context.

Interview	Role	Place of Employment	Years of Education Experience
Intv1	Primary Education Area Advisor	District in the Central Region of Malawi	30 years
Intv2	Secondary School Headmaster	Government Secondary School in Central Malawi	29 years
Intv3	Secondary School Headmaster	Private Secondary School in Central Malawi	6 years
Intv4	Teacher Training College Principal	Teacher Training College in Southern Malawi	24 years
Intv5	Primary School Head Teacher	Government School in Central Malawi	22 years
Intv6	Primary School Head Teacher	Government School in Central Malawi	12 years
Intv7	University Professor	University of Malawi	17 years

The goal of the analysis was to identify the valued capabilities and functionings of quality teachers as understood through the lens of national educational leaders. The biggest challenge encountered in this analysis was the hyper-focus on teacher quantity that often overshadowed the concept of teacher quality in many national policy and leadership documents. For example, the government's *Education Sector Implementation Plan 2013/14 - 2017/18* outlined a national plan to improve educational

quality and though teachers were often mentioned it was almost exclusively in the context of increasing the number of quality teachers, decreasing student-teacher ratios, increasing the ratio of teachers to available teacher housing, or increasing the number of teachers who had access to quality training. Though the phrases "quality teaching" and "quality teachers" were used, these terms were not clearly qualified or defined. This was the case in many documents about teachers at the national level; quality teaching and improving the quality of teachers was valued, but very little was said about what constituted quality teaching. Additionally, poor quality teaching and teachers who were not "dedicated" were poorly regarded, but outside of chronically absent teachers there were no clear parameters that defined poor quality teaching.

The inclusion of national teacher training materials in the document review added greater depth to the relatively nonspecific statements in national policy documents, as did the inclusion of interviews of educational leaders during which the topic of quality could be explored more thoroughly. Even so, the valued capabilities and their corresponding functionings identified here remain somewhat generic in nature due to the lack of a specific, shared definition of what constitutes a quality teacher in Malawi.

Despite these challenges, 16 valued capabilities from the official context regarding quality teachers were identified. Capabilities are defined as the real opportunities or real freedoms of individuals to pursue what is valued (Senn, 1999). The term capabilities refer to what people are able to be or do, and functionings are the corresponding achievements or actions (Robeyns, 2018). Functionings identified are the tangible actions or achievements that contribute to the identified capabilities. Table 3 includes the valued capabilities for quality teachers (what education officials believe a

quality teacher should have freedom to be or do) and the functionings (what education officials believe a quality teacher should be able to do in order to achieve the corresponding capability) as identified in this data analysis. The educational documents and education leader interviews included a total of 28 combined data sources coded and analyzed to find common valued capabilities. In order to be included on the list, the valued capability had to be represented in 16, or half, of the data sources. The next sections present brief discussion of each of the valued capabilities and functionings from the official context.

Table 3. Capabilities and functionings from the official context.

Official Capabilities: *(Freedom to . . .)*	Official Functionings: *(Able to be and do . . .)*
Assessment *(measure teacher efficacy and student outcomes)*	Ensure students pass school and national exams. Ensure students are literate. Evaluate student learning daily to assess and address student difficulties. Teacher candidates pass teacher qualifying exams.
Community Collaboration *(increase the engagement of adults to meet educational goals)*	Engage parents in the value of schooling. Improve community involvement in developing school infrastructure. Encouraging reading at home and/or outside of school.
Continuing Professional Development *(learn new teaching strategies and implement new initiatives)*	Implement the national curriculum with fidelity. Improve teaching skills through ongoing training, Overcome low student performance.
Feedback & Improvement *(reflect & improve on instructional practices)*	Be observed by supervisors and peers. Accept suggestions from supervisors and colleagues and implement into daily practice. Reflect on and learn from successes and failures.
Effective Instructional Strategies *(use a variety of high-impact teaching strategies to support learning)*	Use modeling to support student learning. Use gradual release model (I do, we do, you do) to present information to students. Use appropriate pacing to support student learning.
Equity for Special Needs Students *(meet the needs of diverse learners)*	Increase enrollment of special needs students. Include special needs students in classes. Actively eliminate derogatory or demeaning practices towards learners with special needs. Providing specialized classes and instruction for learners with special needs.
Gender Equity for Students *(encourage participation and reduce barriers for female students)*	Ensure equal class participation for boys and girls. Provide increased support for older, female primary students to stay in school. Report any gender-based violence observed at school.
Gender Equity for Teachers *(foster participation of females in the teaching profession)*	Ensure equal participation of male and female teachers in training and leadership opportunities. Ensure female teachers are represented in rural teaching posts. Report any gender-based violence observed at school.

National Development *(contribute to national development goals by improving outcomes for students)*	Equip students with knowledge and skills to contribute to national development. Reduce child labor by supporting student attendance at school.
Lesson Planning & Delivery *(plan and prepare in advance for teaching)*	Prepare materials and resources in advance to support student learning. Practice delivering lessons prior to class time. Teacher training includes practice with lesson planning and delivery.
Quality Teacher Preparation *(be trained and prepared to meet professional expectations)*	Access to quality initial teacher training. Feel prepared for success in professional work. Acquire adequate content knowledge to support quality instruction for students.
Reading & Literacy *(effectively teach reading and early literacy skills)*	Support all students in attaining basic literacy skills in Chichewa and English. Understand and teach the five essential components if literacy instruction. Develop a culture of reading at school and within the community.
Safe & Positive Schools *(maintain a safe and orderly environment for learning)*	Use appropriate classroom management techniques to create an orderly and effective learning environment. Have a positive attitude towards students and cultivate a positive class culture. Eradicate corporal punishment from schools.
Teacher Dedication *(act with integrity and present oneself professionally)*	Demonstrate exemplary behavior at school and in the community. Dress professionally. Attend school regularly.
Teachers as Trainers *(act as an ambassador for national education initiatives).*	Serve as facilitators for nationally developed professional training. Lead others in implementing nationally-mandated training or curriculum. Act as liaisons between parent or community organization and the school.
Teaching Resources *(having space and materials necessary to instruct students)*	Have textbooks and teacher's manuals. Have classrooms for students. Have access to appropriate basic living needs such as housing and water.

Assessment. Assessment was a valued aspect of quality teaching and was used in two different capacities: assessment to measure teacher efficacy and assessment as a tool used by teachers to adjust and improve instruction. Results on final exams and international assessments were used in policy as measures of teacher efficacy. For example:

> "Results from both the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) and the Monitoring Learning Achievements (MLA) have revealed that many children in Malawi are unable to read even after spending five to six years in school. These revelations point to the dire need to improve reading instruction and reading outcomes in order to achieve the goal of universal primary education" (Doc15, CTTM, 2016).

Additionally, a zone-level educational leader identified assessment as one of the key things looked for from a teacher during classroom observation:

> "I look for records saying he has done some kind of assessments. The exams show what is happening in the classrooms. That will affect the strength of the teaching. And the weakness" (Intv1, ZL, 2018).

Shorter-term formative assessment was an expectation of teachers in order to plan instruction and measure incremental learning.

Community Collaboration. Collaboration between schools, parents, and the community at-large was also valued at the national level. The development of parent and teacher committees to improve academic support for students outside of the school day was a key strategy in many of the educational development plans and was a

component of school improvement plans. "Educating families about ways to incorporate reading at home is critical to the process of learning to read" (Doc1, S1ETG, 2016, p. ii).

The formation of community committees to support infrastructure development and the development of a culture where education was also highly valued. This value was reflected in national policy and by school leaders, as explained by a primary school head teacher:

"We need the relationship; we can't be teaching their learners without that relationship. If there is a way to tell if there is a good relationship, it is that is you tell the community that there are projects to be doing and if the relationship is good, the community will come in and do the projects" (Intv5, PH1, 2018).

The educational leadership perspective included a strong focus on the need for collaboration between schools and community stakeholders.

Continuing Professional Development. Ensuring teachers and school leaders have continuing training and development was another important value of educational leaders in Malawi.

"Teachers' skills need to be improved through ongoing education. Regular supervision and ongoing training have the potential to address knowledge gaps and upgrade and reinforce acquired skills" (Doc17, MEF, 2014, p. 5).

Continuing professional development was seen as a tool to launch new national education initiatives in which all teachers would undergo the same training and also as an opportunity for zones or schools to personalize support to meet more specific needs; such as to "refresh and expand teaching practices with a focus on areas that may present challenges in the classroom" (Doc8, S1TTFG, 2017, p. iii).

Feedback and Improvement. Feedback and improvement was another key value of educational leaders in regard to teacher quality. Teachers who reflected on feedback and used feedback as a tool to facilitate improvement were highly valued. In fact, the latest national education plan indicated that a lack of feedback to teachers regarding instruction was a contributing cause in poor student outcomes: "Poor inspection of schools and teachers has led to weak supervision of the quality of teaching and learning" (Doc16, MESP, 2008, p. 19). An interview with the principal of a teacher training college indicated the national curriculum for primary school preparation would soon be changed to facilitate more opportunities for reflection on the part of pre-service teachers:

> "The three-phase program includes two terms at the TTC (teacher training
> college), two terms of student teaching, and two terms back at TTC for reflection
> on the practical teaching experiences" (Intv3, TTCH1, 2018).

The revision of the national teacher training program was being undertaken with the goal of increasing opportunities for reflection, indicated that reflection is an important aspect of quality teaching.

Effective Instructional Strategies. Use of effective instructional strategies, as outlined in teacher training and resource materials, was another key value from the educational leadership perspective. These strategies included appropriate pacing, instruction delivered in the appropriate language, a focus on building strong foundational skills, checking for student understanding during lessons, and using a gradual release model of I do, we do, you do. Resources for teachers included very specific information about expected instructional strategies:

"Explicit modelling means that you demonstrate very clearly and slowly, even

exaggerating what you want them to be able to do. Concrete modelling means

that you provide all possible means of support to aid understanding. This support

must be in the form of something that they can see, hear, or touch. This is why

realia, gestures, role-plays, and drawings are so important" (Doc1, S1ETG, 2016,

p. ix).

Fidelity of implementation of these strategies and the national curriculum materials was

highly valued; this was evidenced in the teacher observation instrument included in the

national curriculum resources.

Equity for Special Needs Students. "Equitable access to quality and relevant

special and inclusive primary education" (Doc21, MNEP, 2013, p. 6) was another key

value of educational leaders in Malawi. Though many of the education leader

interviews indicated that the "special needs teachers face great challenges because

they are usually itinerant and assigned to multiple schools within a zone, but they have

no transportation to get to these schools" (Intv4, TTCH1, 2018); the provision of

educational opportunities for students with special needs was highly valued.

Additionally, building a culture in which people with special needs were respected and

included was also an important value: "Use of derogatory stories or jokes and

demeaning expressions against girls/women and boys/men and people with disabilities

will not be tolerated" (Doc15, CTTM, 2016, p. viii).

Gender Equity for Students. Nearly every interview and document included

information about the importance of encouraging the participation of girls in all levels of

education. There were policies that lowered the criteria for entrance to teacher training

colleges in order to increase the number of female applicants, policies to provide

additional support for girls in upper standards of primary schools, improve access to

bathroom facilities to better meet the needs of menstruating girls, and increase

teacher's awareness of actions that can inadvertently discourage girls. An excerpt from

one of the national curriculum teacher manuals highlights this:

> "For example, if there are not enough teaching-learning materials for all learners,
>
> how do you manage your class to ensure all your learners can access the
>
> materials equitably? Do you alternate between calling up girls and boys to make
>
> sure both are given chances to participate in class? Do you give all your learners
>
> an equal amount of time to answer questions or to get extra support" (Doc1,
>
> S1TTFG, 2017, p. iv).

> *Gender Equity for Teachers.* In addition to emphasizing gender equity for

students, input from educational leaders also valued empowering more women to

become teachers. The lower graduation rates from primary and secondary schools

were a key factor in the gender discrepancy among teachers.

> "The girls they start dropping out more than boys and there are fewer girls who
>
> graduate from primary school going to secondary school, and then there are
>
> fewer girls graduating from secondary school and going to college, so the
>
> numbers of teachers are shifting for the boys" (Intv3, SH2, 2018).

The data collected indicated a level of awareness at the national level that "the lack of

female teachers has a detrimental impact on female students" (Doc16, MESP, 2008, p.

19).   Prior to 2012 female teachers could get permission to leave rural school postings

to be near their husbands, but more recently, female teachers were required to work in

a rural posting for their first five years regardless of their marital status. This change

was made in part to ensure more female teachers would be available to serve as role

models for girls in rural communities. "Policy-makers need to focus their attention also

on achieving the right mix of teachers, including recruiting teachers from under-

represented groups" (Doc17, MEF, 2014, p. 4).

National Development. The notion that quality teachers contribute to national

development was a prominent theme in many of the interviews and documents included

in this analysis.

> "The vision for the education sector is to be a catalyst for socio-economic
>
> development, industrial growth and instrument for empowering the poor, the
>
> weak and voiceless. Education enhances group solidarity, national
>
> consciousness and tolerance of diversity" (Doc16, MESP, 2008, p. 1).

The educational goals for school site 4 took the idea of education as national

development and further broke it down into smaller steps, including developing self-

reliance, awareness of environmental resource and management practices,

appreciation of the impact of rapid population growth on delivery of services, and

developing vocational and entrepreneurship skills (Doc13, S4GEM, 2018).

Lesson Planning and Delivery. Advance preparation and consideration of how

lessons should be structured and delivered was a highly valued aspect of teacher

quality. In each head teacher's office, there was a chart posted on the wall that

documented weekly lesson plan audits and the zone leader stated:

> "How do we know that this teacher is ready to teach? They have to produce
>
> documents that say 'I am ready to teach my learners'. That would be schemes

and lesson plans; teaching and learning materials. All of these say the teacher is ready to deliver their instruction" (Intv2, ZL1, 2018).

In addition, the teacher training materials had a consistent focus on lesson preparation and rehearsal strategies to use before teaching.

Quality Teacher Preparation. Completion of quality teacher preparation was the most valued component in high quality teaching and was included in the vast majority of data sources reviewed. Completing a national teacher training program has the distinction of being the only policy-based requirement for entry into the teaching profession. Upgrading the quality and availability of teacher training colleges was of particular importance; "It is not enough just to want to teach. People should enter the profession having received a good education themselves" (Doc17, MEF, 2014, p. 4). Educational leaders put a great deal of trust in the teacher training process and one of the head teachers indicated that "a high-quality teacher would be someone who has undergone teacher training in college. In other words, he understandings the concepts of teaching and learning" (Intv3, SH2, 2018).

Reading and Literacy. Use of appropriate teaching strategies to support the acquisition of basic reading skills was an important value of educational leaders in regard to quality teaching. The poor performance of students on national and international reading exams is mentioned in policy documents, quoted in teacher's manuals, and brought up by educational leaders. This was almost always as a precursor to discussion about the need for additional teacher training on reading acquisition and effective strategies for teaching reading to young students. Additionally, the need to develop a culture of reading in Malawi was included both in the documents

reviewed and in the interviews that were conducted. As one of the head teachers shared:

"They need to sit down and read, so that becomes a challenge. I really want to see a reading culture developing maybe among students in Malawi. Maybe among the primary age up to secondary school, but I think most of the challenges we are experiencing would be handled in that way" (Intv6, HT2, 2018).

Safe and Positive Schools. Safe and positive schools were valued in quality teaching and included such ideas as having a positive environment in which students feel comfortable taking risks, the use of classroom management strategies to maintain order, positive reinforcement of student behaviors, and defining and negating teacher negligence.

"All learners will make mistakes as they learn. Learning from mistakes is an important part of the learning process. Therefore, teachers need ensure that when learners make a mistake in class, other children (and other teachers) do not ridicule them. This is called creating a risk-free learning environment. If learners perceive each mistake as a failure, they will eventually stop trying to learn. If learners are afraid to try to learn, they will not learn" (Doc1, S1ETGF, 2016, p. iii).

More broadly, there is an expectation that teachers will help to "inculcate in the student acceptable moral and ethical behavior" (Doc13, S4GEM, 2018, p. 1).

Teacher Dedication. Dedication to teaching was another valued aspect of quality teaching and included an understanding of teaching as a calling and as part of a larger

commitment to improving the nation of Malawi. This value was manifested in national

education policy goals which included the notion that teachers make personal sacrifices

on behalf of the greater good, teachers should conduct themselves courteously and

morally within the community, and teachers should dress neatly and professionally.

Additionally, teachers were expected to abstain from alcohol, perform all assigned

duties, and avoid absenteeism.

> "Governments should work more closely with teacher unions and teachers to
>
> formulate policies and adopt codes of conduct to tackle unprofessional behaviour
>
> such as persistent absenteeism and gender-based violence" (Doc17, MEF, 2014,
>
> p. 7).

In general teachers were portrayed in one of two disparate ways: model citizens who

were dedicated to their profession and worked above and beyond expectations without

complaint or as unprofessional, slovenly people who inconsistently attend work.

> *Teachers as Trainers.* All of the national curriculum and school-based

professional development structures relied on a train-the-trainer model in which a small

group of teachers were trained to deliver intensive training to their peers on new

practices or initiatives.

> "The MoEST encourages all of those involved in this effort—Primary Education
>
> Advisors, teachers, head teachers and others—to fully engage in the trainings
>
> and ongoing activities to support improved literacy. It is only through everyone's
>
> hard work and commitment that we will realise the important goal of ensuring that
>
> all Malawian children can read and write" (Doc8, S1TTFG, 2017, p. ii).

This model included teachers attending multi-day trainings in order to have in-depth knowledge and be prepared to use structured materials to present the same training to peers at their schools. At the educational leadership level, there was a widely-held opinion that teachers had agency and support to take on leadership roles, as evidenced by the teacher training college principal who stated, "Fortunately, this time around people are listening and a lot of improvements have come from the bottom up" (Intv4, TTCH1, 2018).

Teaching Resources. Reliable access to teaching resources was consistently identified by education officials as a necessary component in quality teaching and therefore a valued aspect of quality teaching. Within the official context, access to resources was important to teacher quality on two levels: first, ensuring teachers had access to teaching resources such as classrooms, textbooks, pens, exercise books, and other school materials; second, ensuing teachers had access to appropriate resources for daily living such as clean water, adequate housing, and sufficient salary.

The principal of the teacher training college articulated the connection between quality teaching and access to resources:

"This highly qualified teacher starts with dedication to duty, is resourceful, creative, observes social distance, considers diversity so they can include all learners in the classroom. But teachers are put into difficult positions because they are in need to survive and care for their families and they must be able to do that in order to achieve those other qualities I mentioned earlier" (Intv4, TTCH1, 2018).

Access to resources was determined to be important to quality teaching both for the professional work of teachers and in their personal lives outside of the classroom; this is evidenced in policies outlining resources that should be guaranteed to all schools and students, as well as policies which prescribed the quantity and quality of teacher housing and other amenities that should be made available to all teachers.

Summary

This section has provided findings regarding the valued capabilities and functionings of quality teachers from the perspective of national educational leaders in Malawi. The primary focus teacher quality at the national level was on quantity and allocation of teachers, leaving limited emphasis on the quality of teachers or valued aspects of teachers. Despite that, analysis uncovered 16 capabilities of quality teachers that were valued across a majority of data sources from the official context of educational leadership in Malawi. Chapter five contains further analysis of these findings as well as implications for future research and practice.

Research Question 2

Valued Capabilities from the Teacher Context

The second research question addressed in this study was "What do rural, Malawian, female teachers value in teaching?" This data was collected via interviews and observations of female, primary school teachers in one school zone in central Malawi. According to Robeyns (2017), the early life experiences, character, and the internal dispositions and resources of an individual impact each individual's capabilities and constraints. The next sections introduce each teacher participant including background information, insight from observation of their teaching, and information

about their key values, all of which contributed to an enhanced understanding of the values, agency, and constraints experienced by the teacher participants in this study as it related to the teacher-generated capabilities. Table 4 shows the participants included in this analysis as well as information about their level of education in addition to the required teacher training college, years of experience, level of promotion (4 is entry level, 1 is the highest promotion level that can be attained), the primary standard taught, and the number of blocks taught per day.

Table 4. Teacher Participant Information

Participant	School	Educational Attainment	Years of Experience	Promotion Level	Standard Taught	Blocks Taught/ Day
Joyce	Site 1	Secondary	9	PT4	3	3
Lacey	Site 1	Some University	20	PT3	5	3
Naomi	Site 1	Secondary	18	PT3	2	3
Sera	Site 1	Secondary	6	PT4	1	3
Tamanda	Site 1	Secondary	12	PT4	7	3
Cynthia	Site 2	Secondary	16	PT4	7	2
Mtewa	Site 2	Secondary	24	PT3	8	2
Ritta	Site 2	Secondary	22	PT4	1	4
Ruth	Site 2	Secondary	21	PT2	7	2
Stella	Site 2	Secondary	22	PT4	3	3
Agnes	Site 3	Some University	7	PT4	6	8
Esther	Site 3	Secondary +*	6	PT 4	2	7
Grace	Site 3	Secondary	1	PT4	5	8
Linda	Site 3	Secondary	27	PT2	2	7
Mary	Site 4	Secondary	14	PT4	1	7

*Secondary + indicates a teacher has retaken some high school courses and/or exams in order to apply for university

Agnes. Agnes taught Standard 6 at the site 3 school in a small village about 5 kilometers from the trading center. Though her class was considerably smaller than what was typical at the site 1 and site 2 schools, Agnes was the only Standard 6 teacher at her school, so she taught all the class periods and subjects to her students, making her workload much higher than the first two schools where multiple teachers shared the teaching responsibilities for a single class. She was in her 7th year of teaching and was also enrolled as a degree candidate at Mzuzu University where she was working towards qualification as a secondary school teacher. Her university coursework was designed for working professionals and included distance learning as well as face-to-face courses that occurred during school holidays.

Agnes was in her mid-thirties and married with children of her own. The abbreviated primary school hours initially drew Agnes to teaching; with free hours in the afternoon she was afforded time to care for her family's needs while still drawing a salary. During the 7 years Agnes was teaching there were no opportunities for Malawian primary school teachers to receive promotions; this had prompted Agnes to pursue university and make herself eligible for a much more lucrative position as a secondary school teacher: "Since I started my work there has been no promotions. So that is why I choose to go to a university so that I can upgrade myself and give myself a promotion."

As a newer teacher, Agnes was subject to the teacher posting regulations that required teachers to serve their first 5 years in a rural school without the benefit of the 'following husband' transfer that allows a female teacher to be posted near her husband. After 5 years, she was transferred to the site 3 school.   Though she was still

assigned to a rural school, she lived near the trading center with her husband and cycled from her home with her husband to school in about 20 minutes; walking took about 55 minutes.

Agnes taught all Standard 6 students at her school and consistently had less than 30 students, making this by far the smallest class observed during the field research. Her classroom had desks and benches for all students clustered into four groups that facilitated students working in small groups and sharing books and materials. One typical lesson included the introduction prepositions. Agnes identified and defined prepositions, with students reciting after her, followed this with questioning the students about the material. She then modeled how to identify the prepositions in a given sentence and guided the students in completing another example as a whole class before assigning the students sentences from the textbook to copy down and then circle the prepositions. Only about five or six students out of the 30 class members had English textbooks, so the students crowded together to complete this assignment. They worked silently and with great concentration as Agnes circulated the room to look at their work and give feedback; copying the sentences took quite some time and was the longest time spent on a single activity during the class period. All of the instruction was given in English though the feedback and side conversations between students and between students and teacher were in Chichewa. The class concluded with the students reviewing and correcting their work together.

Agnes's Educational Values. At her initial school placement in a more remote area 7 years ago, Agnes was the first female teacher who had ever worked at the

school. This was a very positive experience which caused her to value her role as teacher as synonymous with that of a role model:

> "They received me well; they welcomed me very well. And when I come on the first day, they tell me, 'You are the first female teacher, the first lady teacher to be here at this school.' So, I was the first lady teacher to teach there. So, I enjoyed the time. And more and more learners, they were also what? Excited. They were excited to see a lady teacher teaching. The girls especially."

Agnes was pleased with the spirit of acceptance she experienced as a female teacher in a rural community and saw teaching as an opportunity to show children, especially girls, how education can contribute to a brighter future.

She also valued community collaboration between the communities to which teachers are assigned and the teachers themselves.

> "The community come here (to school) and they ask the head teacher why are we not seeing the so-called teachers, not coming here to school? What happened? What happened to him or her? So, the head teacher is having it explained from the community, Mr. So-And-So has gone here to such and such and is drinking over there. When the teachers misbehave, the community do come here and say it. They report it to the head teacher . . . If we (the teachers) have certain problems, like when we want to search for some land for harvest, for cultivating; the community, they do assist us with the land to cultivate so we can grow crops; different crops, like the maize. So, there is at least good interaction with the rural community."

For Agnes, community collaboration was a compact which included both accountability of the teachers to perform their assigned tasks and accountability for the community to help the teachers survive and thrive in the community to which they were posted.

Agnes also valued responsive and engaging instruction for students, a goal which was challenging for her to achieve when student attendance was inconsistent:

"When the teacher wants to conduct the lesson, we see that a certain learner is absent, and on a certain day another is absent. I can teach, but I am feeling for those who are absent because those who are absent are missing the what? The lesson. Yes. So, when they come back, I need also to revise what the learners are doing so that those who were absent can be together with those who were present so that they can capture a certain thing. It is very tough for a teacher to do the job where there are some learners who are absent."

Agnes did not simply proceed with her lessons from one day to the next because the calendar had moved forward a day; she was genuinely concerned about each of her students and what learning they would be able to access each school day. She placed a high value on learning being accessible and relevant for each learner in her class.

Cynthia. Cynthia taught Standard 7 at school site 2 near the trading center. Her husband taught at a secondary school in a small city about 125 kilometers away; he lived away from Cynthia and visited on weekends. Their oldest child was a boarding student at secondary school, while the two younger children attended the school where Cynthia taught and lived with her. Though many of the teacher participants had originally desired other career opportunities before settling for a career in primary teaching, Cynthia had dreamed of being a teacher since attending primary school

herself. She described her 1st year as a temporary teacher: "I enjoyed it! I was excited!

I had always wanted to be what? To be a teacher! I was doing what I wanted. I was

happy; I think, Oh, I am a teacher!"

Cynthia was in her 40s and began as a temporary teacher in 1997 when the

teacher shortage was so severe many taught without any training or qualifications. She

eventually attended a 2-year teacher training program and became qualified to teach in

2004. Though she had a total of 16 years of experience, she had never had an

opportunity to pursue promotion. Cynthia's children, the children of two teachers, all

excelled at school and the family was anxiously awaiting their daughter's results on the

Primary School Leaving Exam which would determine her eligibility for secondary

school.

Cynthia shared responsibility for teaching the Standard 7 class with four other

teachers and therefore taught only English classes, a total of two 30-minute blocks per

day, to a group of about 100 students. Each English lesson observed during the

research included a reading passage and comprehension work about the passage. In

one typical lesson, class began with the teacher asking students to discuss possible

causes of deforestation. They whispered together quietly for a few moments, mostly in

Chichewa, before Cynthia passed out books to the students and read aloud a passage

about deforestation as students followed along. After reading, Cynthia asked the class

several oral questions about the effects of deforestation before asking the class to

complete the charts in the book about the text. The students worked silently for more

than 10 minutes to copy the complex graphic organizer from the book into their

notebooks and then began to fill in the chart. Cynthia circulated through the room and

stood over one student for quite some time to make sure he was completing his work. Cynthia posted an anchor chart on the board with the answers filled in and ask students to exchange papers and check each other's work as they reviewed the material. Most students managed to copy down the charts but did not have time to add answers. Few students added any answers to their papers before the books are collected and class was dismissed. The class began on a new topic, text, and set of charts in the next lesson.

Cynthia's Educational Values. Cynthia's experiences as a temporary teacher formed some of her educational values, in particular her appreciation and respect for teacher collaboration:

> "I go to other teachers to assist me. At that time, there were teachers knowing
> more than me and they help me here and there. Little by little I did well. Still here
> (at her current school) I ask my sisters for help when thinking of ideas."

As someone who stepped into the classroom with no formal training, her primary support network when she was learning to teach was her colleagues at her school site; this shaped her values regarding the importance of collaboration between teachers in successfully teaching students.

Cynthia also valued teachers as role models; she admired her teachers when she was a girl, so much so that she became a teacher herself. As a teacher, she worked to be that same inspiring role model for her students:

> "We are role models. We are also role models so they admire their teachers and
> what we are doing. They see we are working hard here so they can see that
> they can also have a good future when they work hard. You can achieve your

goals if you are working hard here at school."

As a teacher of students who are just a year or two from finishing school and increasingly at risk for dropping out, Cynthia's talk with her students about the future was as practical as it was inspirational.

An extension of Cynthia's value of teachers as role models was her value for life-long learning opportunities:

"I encourage my learners to work hard; tell them that by working hard they will do well. To help them have what? A good future. You can have a job and be making a future."

This belief in the impact of education on future opportunities was a value seen across many of the participants, though Cynthia was unique in that she shared this value not only with her students, but with the families of her students as she attempted to inspire the parents in her community to engage in their children's education.

Esther. Esther taught Standard 2 at the site 3 school in a village about an hour's walk from the trading center. Her husband was a teacher at the secondary school in the trading center not far from where they lived with their 6-year old son. Esther had been posted at this school since she first qualified as a teacher 6 years earlier. Esther and her son walked 55 minutes to and from school each day.

Esther herself grew up in a small city and lived in the trading center, so teaching in the village school was her first significant exposure to rural life and she was very aware of the differences in school life in this village as compared to her own childhood experiences. She pointed out that though the school timetables reflect classes beginning at 7:30, students did not arrive until after 8:00 so she had also started arriving

after 8:00. Esther was the only Standard 2 teacher, so she taught all subject areas, which based on the timetable amounted to about 7 class periods per day, though her late arrival interfered with the school timetable. Her class typically had about 65 students who all sat on the concrete floor in pre-designated groups.

Esther shared that English was her most challenging subject to teach and was frustrated with the new national reading curriculum because of the phonics-based approach to reading instruction. A typical English class for Esther included her introduction of a conversational topic with the goal of the students asking and answering questions about that topic and then learning and applying a decoding strategy with words related to that topic. Esther's students consistently struggled to repeat the English phrases she presented, and she would often skip parts of the lesson if the students were struggling. She had great difficulty leading the student in decoding activities, especially presenting correct letter names and letter sounds which inevitably lead to student using incorrect sounds in their attempts to sound out words. At one point she called on eight students in a row to name the letter i and none were able. Despite these challenges, she continued to attempt to teach the curriculum and incorporated engaging structures such a tossing an object around the classroom that when caught, meant the students were to respond. Esther did not seem aware of the inaccuracies in her teaching, but rather felt the students' struggles were the result of the curriculum: "All of that is totally different, to come with the sounds rather than read the words. The teacher should give the words instead of all these sounds. Not all this /t/ /ee/ /a/ /ch/, no! Just say teacher!"

Esther's Educational Values. Despite Esther's struggles teaching the reading

curriculum, she had great value for the role of compassion and encouragement in

teaching:

> "Most of the learners fear coming to school. They fear that that they will make
>
> some errors . . . If they are wrong, you don't say 'Oh, no!", you say
>
> 'That's ok, you have tried. Thank you and sit down.' You need to praise a learner
>
> and not shout at a learner. If a learner is treated that way, they feel that way and
>
> they will think that teacher is beating me, that teacher is shouting at me, it is
>
> better than I stay at home. I will not go to school."

Esther recognized that even young students were at risk of dropping out of school and

must feel encouraged and supported at school in order to persevere.

Esther also valued opportunities for advancement, which was especially

challenging, since no promotions have been available in more than 10 years. She redid

Form 4 of secondary school via evening classes the previous year, had retaken her

secondary school exam, and successfully earned a higher score that would make her a

more competitive candidate for a degree program to pursue secondary teaching.

Despite this exercise of agency to move her career forward, she also had concerns

about her opportunities moving forward:

> "A female teacher has challenges in every institution. Most of the promotions and
>
> the bigger jobs, they go to the male teachers. Ten go to men and five go to the
>
> women. And most of the time, the training, when trainings come, 5 or 4 go and

none are ladies and it is unfair. And when a female teacher asks for time for other duties from the headmaster they give may not give permission and that is very, very difficult."

Gender disparity in secondary education was particularly concerning for Esther as that was the career she was working towards.

Another education value for Esther was teacher collaboration. She spoke of many kinds of professional development and training, but for her, the most impactful was learning from peers at her school:

"Here we have brought some problems and some experiences because most teachers we have found that they have challenges and experiences and it is with more practical things. We need choose a key teacher who will tell us what to do and make us to be in groups to discuss in groups and give answers from the groups and at the end let's chart and see what the group has done, this group, and this group, so that you can share the issue and know how this group has come up with their answer. As we think about teaching the learners and the best procedures to do to find things."

This advice from trusted peers who Esther was certain had practical, on-the-ground experience was highly valued.

Grace. Grace was in her mid-twenties and was reaching the end of her first year of teaching; she was teaching Standard 5 at the site 3 school. She would cycle about 25 minutes to the school from her home near the trading center. As a new teacher, she was fulfilling her duty to serve at a rural school for her first 5 years of teaching, so she and her one-and-a-half-year-old son were living at the trading center, while her husband

continued his work as a nurse in a small city about 125 kilometers away. He visited when his days off fell on weekends with hers.

Like Agnes' class, Grace's class was very small with less than 40 students. Grace described a number of students who had dropped out of school that year, most commonly to get married or to work as a cabaza (bike taxi operator). She was excited about a recent training she had attended focused on programs and strategies to encourage students to stay in school. She was the youngest teacher at the school, and her more Western-style clothing and hairstyle set her apart from her surroundings.

Grace's classroom was very small and dim; the students sat in rows on the floor and the room contained only a few broken desks in one corner. A typical English lesson began with her introducing a skill or topic, modeling the skill for the students, assigning them practice items from the text, monitoring students as they work independently, and then reviewing the independent work with the whole class. When students answered a question incorrectly, she gave no response to their answer, but would call on another student; she would do this again and again until someone answered correctly. When she assigned the students practice work from the textbooks, some students were not seated near someone who had a textbook, so they sat quietly. When Grace noticed, she quickly reorganized their seating, so all could access a book and all the students began to work diligently. She circulated throughout the room speaking with students in Chichewa and correcting their work until everyone was finished with their exercises; then she reviewed the answers. Standard 5 is the first year Malawian students are instructed primarily in English, and Grace recognized that this change came with challenges.

Grace's Educational Values. Grace valued being able to achieve a reasonable quality of life while pursuing her preferred work as a teacher.

> "I can say since I was born, and I was at primary school, I was admiring teachers. When I see my teacher teaching at the front I was thinking, maybe one day I will be teaching others. Yes. Yes! It was my wish. But I wanted to teach in secondary school not primary. But because of walls up, issues, whatever, that's why I am teaching primary school."

She had a life-long aspiration to be a secondary teacher and her family was continuing to push her to upgrade her education, so she could improve her quality of life and status. She had many plans for her future, including redoing two years of secondary school through evening classes before retaking her secondary exams to earn higher marks that would allow her to attend university. If this plan did not prove fruitful, she planned to leave teaching and open a business.

Grace also valued feedback and improvement in teaching; she expressed a desire to reflect on others' opinions of her work to grow her teaching skills:

> "We do evaluation when we are due. How was the lesson? What was the successes, what was the failures. It's helpful because they do help you, because they say in your lesson you need to have the resources for whatever; you have to help learners to get what is needed."

Particularly as a new teacher and one with a long-time passion to be a teacher, Grace placed great importance on supervision and feedback from her colleagues and supervisors.

Joyce. Joyce was teaching Standard 3 at school site 1 near the trading center. The daughter of a farmer and a primary school teacher, she and her six siblings all attended secondary school and almost all worked in government jobs. She had been teaching for 9 years and 8 of those years were at school site 1. Joyce had a 5-year-old daughter attending nursery school and was married to a secondary school teacher at the local government school. Like many of her colleagues, primary school teaching was not her first career choice, made plain in her statement, "I wanted to work under agriculture, but unfortunately, it was God's plan that I should be a teacher."

Frustrated with the lack of promotion opportunities, Joyce spoke of her desire to retake form 4 of secondary school in evening classes in order to pursue entrance to a university, though she had not yet taken any steps towards this plan. Like all the participants in the study, Joyce described her domestic responsibilities which included all the household cleaning, drawing water and carrying it home, cooking, and caring for children.

Joyce taught English and life skills to Standard 3 students. She and two other teachers shared responsibility for teaching the class, so Joyce typically taught two or three class periods per day. Typically, about 90 students were present in her classes, crowded three to a desk. Her English lessons were focused on asking and answering questions in English along with advanced phonics and word-attack skills such as inflected endings or verb tenses. Each section of each lesson followed pattern of the teacher modeling the skills, the students and teacher working on the skill together, followed by student independent practice in a text book. Students worked in pairs from the textbook activities because about half the students had been assigned books. In

our conversations, Joyce often spoke of the challenges of controlling behaviors in a large class, though the student behaviors and her classroom management strategies were similar to other classroom observed and she enacted the same student partnership and group work strategies as her peers.

Joyce's Educational Values. Throughout the research, Joyce referred to the value she found in teaching as a source of lifelong learning, "You can't forget things because you read more books in teaching to get information, so you get more knowledge in teaching." She spoke of re-reading her books from college so as not to forget her learning and of exploring new topics through her teaching. This brought pleasure and meaning to her work.

Her passion for learning was something that informed her teaching and interaction with her students to the degree that one of her other strong educational values was providing responsive and engaging instruction:

"The most important thing is to know more things so that I can try to explain, so the learners can get something from what I am teaching. My purpose for teaching is to teach learners, to inform learners so that they can understand, they can get something new."

With a parent, siblings, and a spouse that were also teachers, Joyce was very engaged in her practice and reflective about her work.

Joyce valued students having role models, though her experience working briefly in a remote school before being posted at the site 1 school near the trading center informed her opinion that remote communities had limited role models compared to other areas:

"Learners in remote areas, they don't see the importance of learning. So, teachers have more challenges in remote school. Our school here is near a hospital so when they see nurses working, coming to work, they have something that they admire to go to school so that they can become a nurse, become a teacher, become a policeman. They see something they can become through the education. It is different than a remote area."

Lacey. Lacey worked at the site 1 school in the trading center teaching Standard 5 English and life skills classes; typically, about three 30-minute classes each day. She was in her 40s and grew up in a small city about 60 kilometers from where she was posted as a Standard 5 teacher. Though she entered a 2-year teacher training program in 1997, she left the training program after the first year due to pregnancy. After working as a temporary teacher for seven years, she eventually returned to teacher training college to become a fully qualified teacher in 2004. . At the time of the research Lacey was attending Mzuzu University working towards an education degree that would make her eligible to work at secondary school or be a lecturer at a teacher training college.

Lacey had five children, one of whom had died as a toddler. Her four remaining children were all school-aged at the time of the research; her oldest was enrolled as a boarding student at a nearby private secondary school, and her younger three were enrolled in primary school and living with their grandparents in small city about 90 minutes away. Lacey's husband had left 7 years previously and had no contact with the family since, so Lacey was a single parent who relied on her parents to help raise and

support her children; without this help from her parents, her pursuit of a university education would not be possible.

Lacey had been working in education for more than 20 years and had received one promotion from Primary Teacher Level 4 to Primary Teacher Level 3 during her career. Lacey reported that interviews for promotion were seldom extended to teachers and even after her promotion was granted it took several years for her to begin to receive the accompanying salary increase.

Lacey's classroom was always crowded and active. Her students wore uniforms and crowded three or four to a desk; her classes always had more than 100 Standard 5 students. In her life skills classes, she depended on her students to become involved in questioning and discussion. One particular class was focused on conflict resolution and though Lacey began the class with a group discussion of conflict, the majority of the class was spent with the students working in small groups to identify the effects of conflict in the community. Lacey ensured that each group appointed a "secretary" to take notes for the group as well as a "teacher" who would write their responses on the chalkboard and speak about their answer in front of the class. Lacey had a playful but firm attitude with her students and expected them to be involved and active in all aspects of class.

Lacey's Educational Values. One of Lacey's educational values was in regard to quality of life. Lacey's initial aspiration after finishing secondary school was to work as a nurse; when she did not qualify for a nursing program, she was accepted into a police training program. However, her father insisted that she join teaching. After some

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resistance, she entered teacher training. She explained her initial resistance to teaching in the following way:

"By then I was not seeing teachers prosper in Malawi. When I looked at the teachers it seemed like they did not have a good life. The way they dress and the way they live was not looking good. Yeah, so I was not happy becoming a teacher . . . And I say, no. No, Lacey is not going to stay in a ratty house. I will make sure our house is a good house. I'll keep Lacey there and I'll look nice. I'll make myself a big life. I want children to think 'I want to be like Lacey,' so I started doing like that."

Lacey took pride in her ability to manage her money and save for the future while maintaining a reasonable quality of life in which she could dress professionally and have a home that met her standards.

Lacey's focus on self-improvement was extended to her students and her school. She led the Standard 5 teachers in setting an expectation that their students wear uniforms to school (which was not a school wide-practice) and instituted a garden project in which the students planted and cared for a well-manicured garden around their classroom block. Despite her concerns about the low status and remuneration in the teaching profession, she valued teachers as role models:

"Yes, we are, of course, respected. Not well paid, but we do the things so that the learners should learn and improve and not be like me, but be on top of me. So, I must tell my learners I want to see you when you are grown, and I want you to say, this one is my mother and you have your car and your wife and your baby. They shouldn't be like me, they should be over me."

Though Lacey acknowledged teaching may not provide significant tangible rewards, she found great value in the life-long learning opportunities afforded to teachers:

"In teaching you proceed with your education. There is no limitation that now I am old, and you stop. You still keep on learning. You still keep on learning. And if you join other jobs like police, you'll be busy with security and your mind will be switched off. If you join as a nurse you may have some sort of a different (gestures to her head to indicate learning or reading), but the second that you stop, your mind will switch off. But education, with education, you teach. You learn. You teach, you learn. And you keep on until you reach that maximum that you want."

This continuous learning and self-improvement was of great value for Lacey and helped to mitigate some of the challenges of lower salary and financial status.

Linda. With 27 years of experience, Linda was one of the most experienced of all the study participants. Her career began in 1989 as a temporary teacher before the inception of democracy in Malawi. She attended teacher training college in 1993 under the new democratic government. Linda had received two opportunities for promotion in her career, once in 2004 and once in 2011, and achieved promotion each time, leaving with Primary Teacher 2 status. Since then, no additional promotion opportunities were available to primary teachers in Malawi.

Linda's husband died in 2006 and she was left to be the sole provider for their two sons. Both children were grown, one finished university and the other finished college, but both were unemployed and living with her at home. Having worked in

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primary school in the one-party system and under democracy, Linda had insight into the changes that have occurred in the educational system over time, including changes in student achievement. "Now it's a free education, but you can see that they cannot read, and they cannot write. In those days (under the one-party system), of course they are paying for school, but they are reading as well."

Though the site 3 school was located in a rural village, Linda was living near the trading center and cycling about 25 minutes from her home to work. As one of the most experienced teachers on the staff at her school and having achieved a high level of promotion in her career, she served as the infant section head. In this capacity, she observed and gave feedback to other teachers in Standard 1 through Standard 3 and also checked the lesson plans and schemes of her colleagues in the infant section. This responsibility was not tied to any additional remuneration but did increase her status within the school.

Linda's Standard 1 class had about 70 learners who sat together in four smaller groups on the floor, strategically grouped away from several large holes in the classroom's concrete floor. Against the back wall of the classroom were stacked a broken bookshelf, some broken benches, scrap wood, and a non-functional wood stove. Linda had a large presence in her classroom and her students energetically recited English phrases after her and snapped their fingers enthusiastically to be called on to answer questions. She always had detailed lesson plans she worked from for each English lesson. Unlike other Standard 1 English classes observed, Linda did not ever present students with letter names and letter formation instruction, though she incorporated phonological awareness activities and word reading into her lessons. All

of Linda's students had textbooks for English and each time the students got out their books and opened to an assigned page, cloud of dust would emerge from the pages of the books, filling the room with dust and causing everyone in the room to cough.

Linda's Educational Values. Linda valued interacting with and questioning her students as a tool to measure her effectiveness as an instructor.:

"They (the learners) should also participate. When there is interaction, that means that the learners they are getting what they are supposed to get. And also, I expect that they should also ask questions where they are not comfortable. It means the reason is good, the learners understand what I am teaching them. And it also means they are listening to me because they are asking me whether they are understanding."

Though she shared that the large class size made student interaction more challenging to achieve, she used a variety of teaching strategies such as small groups, thumbs up or down, and student demonstration to incorporate interaction with students during her classes.

Improving one's quality of life was another important educational value for Linda. Having worked in five different schools in her career, both urban and rural, she had a clear sense of the benefits of challenges of each setting. Working and living in a remote community came with the opportunity to cultivate land, thereby curtailing the food costs for her family. Living in town came with more personal costs, but also more opportunities to participate in income generating activities such as selling goods or services to others in the community.

"No, even with that allowance, it is better to be in the urban areas because there, after working hours you can do certain business and easily earn money, not less than 10,000 a month, but when you are here, you get just the 10,000 allowance. It is very little."

For Linda, the 10,000 kwacha rural living allowance was not enough to compensate for the quality of life differences between rural and urban living.

Another of Linda's educational values was student participation. Student's achieving a basic level of access school materials, appropriate clothing, and access to food directly impacted their ability to attend and participate in school and impacted Linda's efficacy as a teacher:

"You can see the majority of them, they come here in the morning with empty stomach and no packed meals, so they are hungry at school. In Standard 1 you can start teaching up to 10:00; from past 10:00 they cannot keep on because they are hungry. Internally, we just extend the subjects like English and maths in the morning and then expressive arts and the like later so that we see that the subjects like English, Maths, and Chichewa they take in the morning when they are more comfortable and then we keep these weak subjects like expressive arts later of the day."

Though Linda did not have opportunities to fill in the resources gaps of her students, she and her colleagues did use mitigating strategies to improve student participation and reduce the impact of limited resources, such as frontloading the most difficult academic subjects earlier in the school day when students had greater stamina and attention.

Mary. Mary taught Standard 1 at school site 4, located about 10 km from the trading center. She was one of only two female teachers assigned to this more rural school within the research zone.   Mary's youngest child attended the school where she taught, another cycled daily to a private catholic secondary school in the trading center, and the oldest was applying to colleges; her husband worked as a farmer. Mary lived with her husband and three children in teacher housing adjacent to the school. Overall, Mary found satisfaction in her work and her employment, though she struggled with the low quality of housing at the school, specifically the leaking thatched roof, lack of electricity, cracked concrete floor, and small overall size of two rooms that comprised her home (approximately eight feet by six feet).

Mary worked as a temporary teacher for 6 years prior to attending teacher training college and being posted to school site 4 in 2010. Mary was one of two teachers assigned to Standard 1 and both she and her co-worker had classes of greater than 120 students. Each of them was the only teacher assigned to their section, meaning that Mary taught all the subjects to all of her students (about seven periods per day), in contrast to teachers at schools sites 1 and 2, who shared responsibility for a single section of students and taught fewer than four periods per day.

Mary's Standard 1 class generally included about 130 students sitting in tightly packed rows on the broken concrete floor in a single classroom. Using real-life props in English class was important to Mary as she believed these examples enhanced student's understanding; for example, in one lesson about tools that are used at home, Mary had brought a broom, a mop, slasher, and a hoe and she and her students used these props throughout the lesson as they practiced asking and answering questions in

English. Mary was very animated as she taught and there was not a moment of down-time in her instruction; transitions were filled with songs, students gave choral responses often, and students were anxious to volunteer. Mary incorporated more conversation and more complex sentence structures into her lessons than the teacher's guide called for, though she omitted the phonics and early reading skills from her English lessons. She indicated that only a few students were capable of completing that part of lesson, so she often did not include those sections. While she managed the incredibly large class size well, when the students were asked to get out their books and follow along, the classroom would become very loud and dusty as the students shuffled among their belongings and flipped pages in the book and it became more challenging for her to keep the attention of the students. She made attempts to circulate throughout the room to monitor and support students, but the classroom was too crowded for her to be able to physically access all the students.

Mary's Educational Values. One of Mary's values was the importance of teacher preparation. As someone who worked as a temporary teacher and taught without any formal training, she placed great importance of the impact that teacher training had on her ability to feel successful in her daily work:

> "My first teaching, I can say that, as I already said, I went to college after some years that I had served. And when I was teaching, I was not imparting the knowledge well because I was not trained. But soon after my qualification, even I myself, I noticed that there is a change. Because the time I went there to be trained, I gained some knowledge there, to impart it to the learners. That why I am saying that my teaching was not good because I was an untrained teacher."

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Her experiences as a teacher pre and post teacher training college influenced her perception of the importance of teacher training opportunities.

Another of Mary's educational values was life-long learning. She enjoyed teaching as it pushed her to learn new things and keep her mind sharp:

> "I like to teach English. Because when I teach English my brain remains flexible with English. My memory does not decay rather than teaching some subjects like Chichewa. My brain keeps me learning."

Mary enjoyed keeping her English skills sharp and learning new things.

Teaching as fulfillment of a national or religious duty was another valued aspect of teaching for Mary. She saw teaching as a calling in service of greater ideals:

> "I can say maybe it is God who . . . it is God who tells me to pass learning to these learners. It's a passion. It's my heart. I enjoy to impart knowledge on them. This is my favorite so that they should be citizens of Malawi."

This feeling of teaching as a greater calling inspired Mary to continue in teaching despite some of the challenges regarding housing and being posted far from home.

Mtewa. Mtewa taught Standard 8 at school site 2 near the trading center. Mtewa and four of her colleagues shared responsibility for teaching English to a single section of Standard 8, meaning that she taught two class periods a day. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Mtewa supervised the six student teachers assigned to the school from a teacher training college in the region. With 24 years of teaching experience, she was one of the most senior teachers at her school. The second born of nine siblings, Mtewa was the first of her siblings to graduate from school; when she became employed as a teacher she began helping to pay for and support her family.

The mother of three, two of her children were enrolled at university while her youngest was attending secondary boarding school. Mtewa's husband worked for a non-governmental organization in the capital city and would visit Mtewa on the weekends.

Mtewa began as a temporary teacher in 1994 and taught for two years before attending a 1-year teacher training program. Originally from the southern region of Malawi, she was transferred to the research site in the central region about 10 years into her career. As a Standard 8 teacher, Mtewa was aware of the challenges facing older primary students including limited seats available in secondary schools, economic pressures facing families that facilitated student drop out, lack of funding for secondary school opportunities, and early marriage. She had a strong focus on helping students stay in school through the completion of primary school and achieving on the primary school leaving exams at the end of Standard 8. In 2012, Mtewa received a promotion from Primary Teacher 4 to Primary Teacher 3, her only promotion in 24 years of service.

Mtewa's class contained about 100 students and met outside under a large tree with the students sitting in six large groups on the ground in the dirt courtyard because of a lack of classroom blocks available for students. A portable chalkboard and desk were carried out under the tree each morning when the students cleaned and organized the campus prior to the start of the first class period. As other students came and went from class and teachers and passersby came near, there was not any type of tangible or intangible boundary around the class that caused others to quiet down or avoid the area where the class met, so the area was quite loud. Mtewa had the students divided into groups and spent some time presenting material to the whole group, allowed some time for group discussion, and independent work. She would circulate among the

groups when they were discussing and encourage them to become more involved in the conversation. During independent practice time, some students without materials to write sat quietly and watched their peers. Mtewa's instruction was systematic and thorough and she taught with no attention to the many distractions occurring around her.

Mtewa's Educational Values. One of Mtewa's primary educational values was compassion and encouragement. She encouraged her students to persist in the face of failure and understand that mistakes are the foundation of learning:

"When I am teaching, I always see them and ask them questions and when they fail, I always help them, and I encourage them. I tell them when you come here, you come to learn. During the learning process first, you come here, and you fail and after the learning process and the work, then you pass. Without failing there is no passing. The learner is supposed to collect the learning before the passing. That's what I encourage them. They are supposed to be encouraged. Without encouragement, nothing can happen."

This mindset was exemplified by Mtewa in her persistence and thoroughness in her instruction, though inconsistent with her tolerance of student sitting idly in class when they did not have materials to participate.

Another important educational value for Mtewa was student achievement. As a Standard 8 teacher she felt particularly responsible for her student's outcomes on their culminating exams from primary school to the extent that a strong measure of her sense of efficacy as a teacher was tied to her students' performance on their exams.

"When I give them something to do, I want them, I expect them to do that thing

very well and to pass it on the test. So, I want them, I expect them to do the activities and the pass. So that is what I want. And they do well. Most of the students, they pass. For example, last year, most of the students got As and Bs."

Access to resources was another key value for Mtewa; her lack of access to key resources such as a classroom in which to meet with her students was a major impediment for her and her pursuit of her educational values:

"Look at these school blocks. The government knows that we don't have blocks, that we don't have water. That pipe there is for teachers not for learners, and the government they are supposed to construct one for learners and they don't. No borehole. So, there are not enough classrooms. Not enough and the ones we have are no good. We have classes outside and this is no good, when peoples pass by, they stop, and they look, so it is no good for the learners. It is no good for the learners to learn outside, they are supposed to learn inside not outside."

Naomi. Naomi taught Standard 2 at school site 1 near the trading center. Born in Zambia to a mother whose parents were originally from Malawi, Naomi petitioned to come to Malawi and live with an uncle in mid 1990s after the death of her father. She and her younger sister left six siblings and their mother behind in Zambia and Naomi, who had recently finished secondary school, applied for various jobs in Malawi. She was immediately hired as a temporary primary school teacher in 1995 and taught for five years before attending teacher training college in 2000. She had taught at nine different primary schools in her career and had been promoted once in her 21-year career.

Naomi had been married and had four children, three in secondary school and one in Standard 7. Naomi's husband had left the family a few years previously leaving Naomi a single parent working to support the children and pay school fees for three children in secondary school. To this end Naomi had several side businesses, including selling groceries, freezes, and making and selling fritters at the market, in addition to managing a sizeable garden at her home. Naomi was very involved in the Catholic church next door to the school; she attended services every morning at 5:30 am before coming to school at 7:00 am and she was the only woman to serve as a sacrist at that church. Naomi was proud of breaking this gender barrier and was frustrated with the inequitable gender roles she experienced.

> "And women in Malawi, they are oppressed by men; a lot of men in Malawi just
> sit. It is women who go to field and women who go for businesses, to feed their
> families. Sometimes, it's like a tradition that women are the ones who are
> supposed to work many hours and men do not."

Naomi's Standard 2 class met in one of the older classrooms at school site 1 that had not yet been refurbished, so the classroom was dim, the walls were deteriorating and there were no desks or chairs for the approximately 120 learners in her class. Naomi's lessons were always planned in advance with anchor charts or visuals made ahead of time to illustrate new English vocabulary or concepts. Her teaching had a brisk pace and her students were highly engaged; class transitions included songs and chants and Naomi encouraged students to recognize and appreciate when others in the class were doing good work. Naomi handled phonics and decoding activities with great skill, for example, when teaching the blend st and the sound /st/ her students grasped

the concept relatively quickly and were able to answer her questions and complete the correlating activities provided with relative success.

Naomi's Educational Values. Maintaining a reasonable quality of life while working as a teacher was a key educational value for Naomi, particularly being able to ensure that she had enough means to send her own children through secondary school.

> "Because when the government has no houses for teachers, you have to go for
> the rent, if you have a house with electricity you have to pay for that, so it is hard
> anyway to concentrate on only teaching. So, you have to do some other small
> businesses; you stop from your normal duties at work. You have to go for other
> things so that at least you've got what you need."

The financial demands of supporting a family combined with the limited salary and benefits from primary school teaching made this a challenge for Naomi.

Another key educational value for Naomi was providing responsive and engaging instruction:

> "When I prepare a lesson, I teach and afterwards I make an observation that
> learners they have not taken in something from that, I don't feel ok. I have those
> learners to come for afternoon as well. Come for the afternoon, that is what I do,
> and we work again and then I see that the learners they are together now. That
> is when I feel good.   To make the learners understand, I like drawing, I like
> writing. I can draw their attention very close to what I want. This is why you see
> a lot of charts upon the walls, anything I can draw."

Naomi went beyond her expected work hours to provide extra lessons at the end of the school day for struggling students, as well as taking time to create drawings and anchor charts to support student learning.

Access to teaching resources was another key value for Naomi. She was adamant that her students have enough textbooks and other materials, so they could participate in lessons. This was so important to her that she would sometimes use her limited personal funds to support students in getting resources for school:

"Yeah, sometimes you if you have enough money you provide something for them (the learners), some pens, or some food. Sometimes I share some soap, this is the soap you have for your clothes, sometimes you arrange for this but sometimes it is very hard. But you help, you buy her some plastic shoes. You help sometimes with these things. It's hard with 125 learners."

Ritta. Ritta taught Standard 1 at the site 2 school; she was the mother of six children and wife to a primary teacher at a nearby school. Her two oldest children had recently completed secondary school, though Ritta and her husband could not afford fees for either of them to attend college (annual secondary and college school fees range from half to three or four times the annual salary of a primary school teacher). Two other children were currently in secondary school and her youngest two children attended the school where Ritta was teaching. She had begun as a temporary teacher in 1994 and completed teacher training college in 2001. With 22 total years of teaching experience, Ritta had never had an opportunity for promotion.

Ritta had been teaching at the site 2 school near the trading center for four years, and previous to that had taught at more remote schools, "since I had joined teaching,

it's just the past four years that I was in a civilized place like this one." She was happy

to be living in a less remote location with more access to amenities. In addition, she felt

that her work responsibilities were more manageable living near the trading center.

"Teaching here is so easy because in class, we have maybe two or three teachers for

one class whereas in the village there is one teacher for the class teaching all the

lessons, but also a larger class."

Even as a Standard 1 teacher working with the youngest students, Ritta

experienced absenteeism and drop out among her students. She had observed that

high rates of absenteeism among her learners often lead to grade repetition, which in

turn lead to drop out, so Ritta often talked with her class about the importance of coming

to school, being on time, and not missing classes.

Ritta's and her colleague shared responsibility for teaching a single section of

Standard 1 which included about 75 students. Unlike most other classes, Ritta's and

her co-worker both remained in the classroom when not taking the role of lead teacher

and helped to monitor students and support each other while teaching. In most other

cases where teachers shared responsibility for a single class, the teacher(s) not actively

working with the class would socialize with other teachers away from students, so this

was notable. The students sat in rows on the floor in the empty classroom, with boys

sitting on one side of the room and girls on the other. The students were eager to

participate and loud in their choral responses to questions. English lessons included

conversational skills and asking and answering questions on a specific topic, for

example one lesson was focused on animals of Malawi. In that lesson students saw

pictures of four animals, practiced the English names for the animals, and had simple

English dialogue about those animals, and the lesson concluded with a phonics component in which the students learned the letter w, it's sound, and identified words that began with /w/. Almost all students had books and they word in teams and in pairs throughout the lesson. The lesson was fast-paced in included songs during transitions, including English songs to welcome the group to class, to close class, as well as "The Wheels on the Bus" children's song, though Ritta laughed that the children would not be aware of what a bus was.

Ritta's Educational Values. Student participation was highly valued by Ritta; this included both their participation in class activities and their participation in attending school in general.

> "We discourage absenteeism; if they drop out from school it is often because of absenteeism, so we encourage them to come to school. And if you drop out, if you reduce that dropout rate; the absenteeism encourages them to be repeaters, and then they drop out. If you encourage them to be at school, they are not repeating and dropping out. I must encourage them to go to school. To continue their education rather than staying at home. I encourage them to come back to school despite their problems."

Setting students on a strong path of participation, from the beginning of their primary school career was important to Ritta.

Collaboration between teachers was another important value for Ritta. Having begun as a temporary teacher she relied on her colleagues for help and support and even in her most recent move to her current school assignment, Ritta found great value in the support and collaboration offered by her coworkers.

"The first year was good because of so much interaction with the other teachers.

They helped me to learn how to teach and how to write schemes of learning, how

to write lesson plans and how to do all this. Also, when I joined his school."

Ritta also served as one of two heads of the infant section of the school, so she was

responsible for helping other teachers of younger grades, a role she felt was important

to support teachers and students at school.

Another educational value important to Ritta was the notion of teaching as a

national or religious calling. Her primary motivation for becoming a teacher was to

improve the future of Malawi by improving outcomes for future generations: "I decided

to be a teacher only for one thing: to develop the nation." Despite challenges of lack of

career promotion opportunities and difficult working and living conditions, Ritta placed

great value in her agency to impact the future via increasing opportunities for her

students.

Ruth. Ruth was one of five teachers assigned to teach a single section of

Standard 8 and the site 2 school near the trading center. She was born to a very poor

family and had little access to food and basic needs as a child. A church in her

childhood community sponsored her through secondary school and teacher training

college, enabling her to attain a profession as an adult. Ruth had been invited to apply

for and achieved promotion twice in her career and had achieved Primary Teacher

Level 2. She and her husband were both primary school teachers; at one point they

had both worked at school site 3, but more recently, she had been transferred to school

site 2.

Ruth taught science, agriculture, and expressive arts to Standard 8 and occasionally to Standard 5. Because her subjects are not ones that are taught more than once a day, Ruth generally taught only one or two class periods each day. Ruth rose every morning at half past three to begin her household chores of sweeping outside, mopping, cleaning, preparing food, and hauling water, all of this before beginning her one-hour walk to school to arrive by 7:00 am. In addition to teaching, she raised domesticated animals to supplement her income. With more than 20 years of experience as a teacher, Ruth was hoping to retire in the next 5 years and expand her animal business and sell groceries as well.

As a teacher of older students with an emphasis on more vocational-oriented classes, Ruth was very invested in ensuring her students had opportunities to build a better future from themselves. She was aware that not all of her students would go on to college and often emphasized skills students could learn at school that could become income generating activities for them in the future. Ruth always assigned homework to her Standard 8 students though there was a shortage of books for students, so she very carefully assigned students to share books based on the area in which they live so that students would be able to share books outside of school to complete assignments.

Ruth's classes typically included 80 to 90 students crowded three or four to a desk. During the research period her expressive arts classes were focused on following a pattern to knit a baby's bonnet. The first knitting lesson consisted entirely of lecture with call and response answers regarding knitting stitches and the technicalities of following a pattern. In subsequent classes, each student received a small amount of yarn and the students either used small sticks they had collected or the tubes from the

inside of their ink pens as knitting needles and followed the patterns and instructions in their textbooks to begin their project. With so many students and just Ruth to help, she was busy circulating the room and inspecting student's work the whole time. She also appointed students who were having success to circulate around the room and help their peers. Though the instruction was provided solely in English, all of the side conversation and incidental instruction and conversation from Ruth and peer helpers was in Chichewa, unless spoken in English for the researcher's benefit.

Ruth's Educational Values. One of Ruth's most essential educational values was teaching as a life-long learning endeavor:

> "It is important because I learn myself. As I read books, I learn many things. For example, when I was teaching Standard 7, I had a topic on how to keep a hare. How to keep the domesticated animals known as hares, you know them? So, I got very interested in that and I started studying that. Then I started keeping them at home. As teachers, we do have knowledge on different activities. By teaching, we also teach ourselves. That is why I love this teaching."

In addition to her focus on ensuring her students learned useful vocational skills, Ruth herself was continuing to learn new skills to change her own opportunities and quality of life, such as raising domesticated animals.

Another educational value for Ruth was teacher leadership. She placed great value in the contributions that teachers can make to the professional based on their practical experiences and had some frustration with the lack of opportunities for teacher leadership:

> "I think they do not give us a chance to give them our views. They do not give us

a chance. For example, when they change the curriculum, no teacher is

involved, no consultation with teachers. When they change the timetable there is

no consultation to teachers. We are punished, partially punished. We are forced

to do things that are not very good for us because it is the government who is

telling us to do so. We just go on doing that."

Ruth saw missed opportunities for teacher leadership at both the local level, such as in

the of teacher input into the daily timetable created at the school level, as well as

national-level curriculum decisions.

Student achievement was also an important educational value for Ruth. Unlike

some of her colleagues who measured student achievement primarily through student

assessment, Ruth's view of student achievement was more contingent on the student's

ability to make a living for themselves upon completion of primary school:

"I tell them that if they go on with their education, they might be having better

chances of a good future. I also tell them there are many activities, many income

generating activities that they can do if they have skills. Without the skills, their

future shall not be good."

Sera. Sera taught Standard 1 at the site 1 school near the trading center where

she and another teacher shared responsibility for teaching a single section of Standard

1. She primarily taught English and maths, generally teaching about three to four class

periods per day. Sera was an orphan who moved between various extended family

members throughout her childhood and was supported through secondary school by a

Catholic charity. After finishing secondary school, she was accepted to a university,

though she was not able to afford the fees, so she enrolled in teacher training college at

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the urging of her sister. Sera was in her mid-twenties, unmarried, and had a three-year-old daughter who attended a nearby nursery school.

As a young, single parent, Sera relied on other income generating activities outside of teaching to support her family, including selling freezes (cold, sugary drinks sold in bags) and other low-cost, low-overhead snacks. After finishing teacher training college, she was initially posted to a rural village, but found the housing and living conditions unacceptable and hustled to make other arrangements with various education area advisors in order to gain her posting at the site 1 school during her first year of teaching, thereby avoiding the policy of new teachers posting in rural villages for their first 5 years of teaching. At the time of the research, Sera was in her 5th year of teaching.

Sera lived about an hour's walk from her school assignment and because she needed to bring her 3-year-old to the nearby nursery school for childcare, she took a bike taxi to work daily, a cost that contributed to her need for extra income outside of her teaching salary. She was concerned with the lack of promotion of the more experienced teachers around her, "You can see that some here, they have worked for more than 30 years, but we are in the same position. That is not fair."

Typically, Sera had more than 100 students in her Standard 1 class, though on several occasions during the research, Sera's colleague who taught the other section of Standard 1 was absent resulting in the two classes being combined and Sera taught a class to a group of nearly 200 6-year old's in a single classroom, which made it difficult for anyone to move while in the room. Sera had excellent command of the phonics concepts she taught in her English classes and was careful to include real-life examples

of the words she was introducing. For example, when introducing the letter p and sound /p/, she would model the correct and incorrect pronunciation of the sound and have items such as paper, pencil, and pen available as tangible examples of things that began with the sound being taught.

Sera's Educational Values. One of Sera's key educational values was interaction with students. Despite her extremely large class sizes, she continued to strive towards interaction and engagement of the learners in her class.

> "You must consider when you are teaching the lesson, what you are teaching the, also, the teaching resources, and even the environment of the learners, where they are sitting. You also need to consider where the learners are sitting maybe consider the groups who are sitting and how the groups are working together. And the difficulties and challenges of the learners, so that they can grab the learning."

This was evidenced in her classroom practice where she often encouraged students to work together in small groups and made great efforts to try to navigate through the packed classroom to see how groups of students were doing in their work together.

Another educational value of Sera's was the importance of feedback and improvement in quality teaching:

> "The head teacher, they give us some supervision, or the lecturers from the TTC (teacher training college), or other teachers. Even people from the village. Many people come to see what we are doing. So, when we have some ups and downs, we are asked to change. It benefited the children and the entire nation in terms of education."

Sera valued feedback and supervision as a means to improve her efficacy as a teacher.

Additionally, Sera valued teacher leadership as a contributing factor in quality teaching. She felt that teacher was uniquely positioned to help solve some of the challenges schools were facing and had positive experiences with educational leaders valuing this as well:

> "When the learners are absenting themselves from school without really good reasons, they (educational leaders) ask us what should we do to lessen the absenteeism of the learners. So, we are supposed to air out our views as to what can be the solution. There are some who listen to the teachers."

Sera put great value in being listened to for her professional opinion and valued the experiences and opinions of her more experienced peers.

Stella. Stella taught Standard 3 at the site 2 school near the trading center, primarily English and maths. She had worked as a temporary teacher for 10 years before completing teacher training college in 2003 and had been teaching at school site 2 since her graduation from that program. Stella was born in Zimbabwe to a Malawian father and Zimbabwean mother and moved to Malawi in the early 1990s after she finished secondary school. When Stella first moved to Malawi, she worked as a secretary, however when she became engaged, her future husband had concerns about the long hours required of a secretarial position, so Stella entered the teaching profession in order to have working hours that would better fit her family responsibilities.

Stella and her husband had seven children before her husband died in South Africa after he had moved there to seek better opportunities for their family. At the time of the research, all of Stella's children were in secondary school, college or further

training. Paying school fees and supporting her family was a top priority for Stella. In addition to her household responsibilities, Stella sold snacks and groceries in the afternoons to supplement her income and she struggled with her lack of opportunity for promotion as a primary school teacher, "There is no motivation. I work hard, but there is nothing that I get. That's why some of the teachers, we are absent." Stella acknowledged that it was sometimes difficult for her to regularly attend school and teacher her classes towards the end of the month when she was running short on money; she explained she would miss work in order to earn money for food for her family, particularly during months when teacher's salaries were late in being released to teachers.

Since she was not raised in Malawi and therefore was educated in English, so one of Stella's biggest challenges in becoming a teacher in Malawi was learning Chichewa. Early in her career she was typically assigned to teacher senior standards because of her ease with English, but she preferred to teach younger students and requested to teach younger grades when she moved to her current posting. Her experiences in a different educational system in Zimbabwe gave her somewhat of an outsider's perspective on the Malawian education system. She was critical of the lack of English proficiency among the primary students, the lack of infrastructure within the schools, and the dearth of student resources including textbooks, libraries, and teacher resources.

Stella's Standard 3 class typically included about 75 students who sat three or four students to a desk. For part of the research period, Stella's class met in a church building across from the school until the community decided the church building has too

many cracks and was too unstable to be safe for the students at which time Stella's class was relocated back to the school's campus and into a Standard 8 classroom that had been recently vacated because Standard 8 students had already completed their classes and final exams for the school year. A typical English class began with group recitation of poetry which would lead into a grammar skill introduced and modeled by the teacher. Following direct instruction, the students reorganized themselves into pre-assigned groups so that they could share textbooks in order to copy down and complete exercises in their notebooks. As with many of the junior and senior section classes, much of the instructional time was taken up with students copying down activities from textbooks into their notebooks. When the students finished their practice exercises, they moved back to their original seats and the teacher circulated around the room to check student's work. Stella was focused on her students and ran a structured and organized classroom.

Stella's Educational Values. One of Stella's key educational values was having a collaborative relationship with the community. Because teachers are assigned and posted at a national level, teachers are almost always outsiders in the communities where they work, and Stella acknowledged the importance of having a good working relationship with the community members where she taught.

> "The community they do look at us and they do respect us. Especially if we are teaching their children and their child is doing very well. They respect us. We work together. Sometimes, if there are projects here, we work together. Some are good. Some are good. But some they do not look at us. They say these teachers earn too much money, so that is a challenge."

Though she recognized that there were some in the community who did not look upon teachers favorably, she continued to pursue positive relationships within the local community.

Student interaction and questioning was another key educational value for Stella. Her students worked regularly and purposefully in groups, sometimes out of necessity due to a shortage of textbooks, but often just to suit her instructional design. "When I get them into groups, when I do this at the beginning, they didn't like to be near someone new or to a boy, but when I am with them, now they don't feel shy, they are doing it." Stella felt this group work was important to prepare them for the future. Stella also valued having teaching resources available. One of her pleasures regarding the recent update to the national curriculum was the fact that the textbooks were now required to be in the care of the students at all times, not just during classes:

> "You need for each one of them to have the books, especially for English, Math and Chichewa. They should have them at home, so even their parents can help them. It would be better. In the past, with the past curriculum, after the learners are reading them, you collect them, and you return them to the office. You see, every day you are collecting them, but now with the NRP (National Reading Program curriculum) you are sending them home and this is better, and better for the parents. Sure!"

Stella believed that students having access to textbooks at home and in the community created more investment of parents in their children's learning and school lives.

Tamanda. At the time of the research, Tamanda had been teaching at school site 1 for about 2 months; she requested a posting in the trading center where the

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research was conducted after her husband was transferred there as part of his work in the Malawi Defense Force. She was in her mid-thirties and grew up in Zomba, a city in southern Malawi. She was one of the first cohorts of teachers to be trained using the Initial Primary Teacher Education (IPTE) model initiated in 2005. After attending training in the capital city of Lilongwe, she was posted to a school in southern Malawi.

Tamanda and her husband had two children and for her first 5 years of teaching she and her children lived away from her husband when she was posted in a rural community.   She taught Standard 7 English, expressive arts, religious studies, and life skills; generally teaching about three blocks per day. With her prior experiences in Zomba and Lilongwe, the trading center felt very rural to Tamanda, whereas that same trading center feels more developed to other teacher participants who have spent significant time in more remote communities.

Teaching was not Tamanda's desired career choice, but when accountant training proved too costly, she chose to attend teacher training college. Entering the profession, she encountered significant financial struggles:

> "My first year, it was hard. Those here in Malawi, we take some time to start getting our salaries, so it was a tough time because we were working without getting paid. I think of quitting because I was just working without any salary, but the other teachers they encourage me, you have to wait, and you will get your money. After four months I get money and I go on with my work."

Tamanda's financial challenges were not unique; many teachers shared stories of late or unpredictable payment schedules that impacted their quality of life.

Tamanda's classes always had more than 140 students crowded three or four students to a desk. As a Standard 7 teacher she expected her students to work independently and in small groups to complete assignments. In one of her Bible Knowledge classes, she called on students to read a few parables aloud before asking the students to work in pairs to identify another parable from the Bible. The students could read well, and they took care to compose their English answers to questions asked by Tamanda. Tamanda primarily gave the students assignments during class and then monitored their completion of the assignments and consulted with students; she did very little whole group instruction.

Tamanda's Educational Values. Tamanda valued feedback and improvement in her teaching practice. She viewed the process of being observed and receiving feedback, both by school and zone leaders as well as her peers, as essential to her efficacy as a teacher.

> "I also like being monitored by the people who are on top of us because I can see where I might . . . I can know what my failures are, and I can see where am I going right and where to improve."

Tamanda demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and a humility to presume that she always had areas of practice in which she could grow and improve.

Another key educational value for Tamanda was the opportunity to pursue advancement in her career. She was frustrated with the lack of opportunities for promotion:

"I am only PT4 (Primary Teacher 4 - entry level), this is my 11th year without

promotion; this is appalling to me. If there is a chance for me to promoted, I

would like that chance."

Student achievement was also a valued aspect of educational quality for

Tamanda. Especially as a teacher of senior section students, student assessment

results were important to her practice and her sense of effectiveness as a teacher:

"When assessment comes to us, when assessment comes, and the learners,

most of them can fail because they got information wrong, and they don't know

what to do during the assessments. So, that tells me that they were not

understanding along the way. So, I have to prepare myself to work with those

learners – I want to give to them properly. Most of the learners cooperate with me

so they tell me where they don't understand so I can explain again, and they can

get the right information."

For Tamanda, student performance on assessment was confirmation of her student's

learning or lack thereof, so she put great value in assessment results and her ability to

adjust her instruction based on their performance.

Educational Values of Teacher Participants

Analysis of interview transcripts and field notes from these 15 primary school

teachers at four different school sites resulted in the identification of 16 key educational

values that defined quality teaching for the teacher participants within the context of

their work in central Malawi. Thematic coding was completed with a focus on identifying

educational values that were common to a majority of participants in order to identify a

set of values that represented the broader teacher experience within the educational

zone where the research was conducted. This was achieved through a process of open

coding of all interview transcripts and observation notes, followed by axial coding to

determine dominant themes. After determining key educational values across all

interviews through axial coding, a code tree was made for each participant. Code trees

were useful in organizing major research themes and correlating these to each

participant, as appropriate, to allow for retrieval of data pertaining to each of the

participants (Boeije, 2010). Figure 3 shows the 16 key values identified in the analysis

and the teacher participants who identified with each of those key values.

　　　　With the exception of Agnes, none of the teacher participants identified with all

16 of the educational values identified in the analysis, but all of the values included in

the final analysis were identified by more than half of the participants. Each of the

teachers also expressed values that were not included on this chart of teacher-

generated values because while they were of importance to a particular participant,

those values were not widely held across the majority of the participants.

Teacher-Generated Values

	Agnes	Cynthia	Esther	Grace	Joyce	Lacey	Linda	Mary	Mtewa	Naomi	Ritta	Ruth	Sera	Stella	Tamanda
Community Collaboration	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
Compassion & Encouragement	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●
Feedback & Improvement	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	○	●
Interaction & Questioning	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	○
Life-Long Learning	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	○
National or Religious Duty	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○
Opportunities for Advancement	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Quality of Life	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●
Quality Teacher Preparation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Responsive & Engaging Instruction	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
Student Achievement	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	●
Student Participation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Teacher Collaboration	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	●	●
Teacher Leadership	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
Teachers as Role Models	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Teaching Resources	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

●	Identified as an important value
○	Not identified as an Important value

*Figure 3.* Teacher-generated capabilities by participant.

Summary

This section has identified the teacher-generated values of the 15 teacher participants. All of the teacher-participants taught in the same geographical area and the capability charts produced here reflect the collective valued capabilities and functionings that were shared by a majority of the participants. While each participant

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had a unique set of valued capabilities, this list reflects collective capabilities and functionings of teachers within the community where the research was conducted. The next section explores the degree to which the teacher participants were able to achieve their identified key educational values in their daily work.

<center>*Research Question 3*</center>

Teacher-Generated Capabilities, Functionings, and Constraints

Having identified what rural, Malawian, female teachers value in teaching, this section focuses on the third question posed in this research: "How do these teachers pursue and achieve what they value in teaching?" Within the capability approach, capabilities are defined as people's real or actual opportunities to engage in valued functionings (Baxen et al., 2013), so the essence of this research question is understanding the capabilities of the teacher participants: the degree to which they can achieve what they value. Functionings are activities, the things that people are able to be and do, that contribute to their efficacy. Agency refers to the freedom people have to strive towards the functionings that are valued. A lack of agency is caused by constraints which limit a person's ability to strive towards and achieve the valued functionings; constraints influence capabilities and fuctionings (Cin & Walker, 2012).

In order to understand the capabilities of the teacher participants, it was necessary to examine the functionings associated with the educational values identified by the teachers and also to examine the constraints which prevented the teacher participants from achieving their valued functionings. Table 5 identifies the teacher's collective values, the corresponding functionings (the teacher actions and mindsets

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necessary to achieve that value), and the constraining factors that prevented some of the teacher participants from achieving those valued functionings.

A Closer Look at Teacher Constraints

The constraints identified in the table above could generally be organized into eight major categories. The first was the impact of lack of educational opportunities on the larger community including lack of educated community members, lack of student background or aptitude for school, and limited exposure to English outside of school. Tamanda articulated these constraints in the following way:

> "Parents from rural areas, most of them, they are not educated. So, when you call them to discuss things about the education of their learner, they have difficulties to understand how to help those learners who find some difficulties. They do not want to cooperate with you because they think that you are just wasting their times."

The idea that lack of educated individuals negatively impacts teacher's functioning was not limited to parents. Lacey had similar concerns about students: "They are not exposed. The children, even the adults, they are not exposed, and they don't enjoy their work mostly."

Table 5. Teacher-generated capabilities, functionings, and constraints.

Teacher-Generated Capabilities: *(Freedom to . . .)*	Teacher-Generated Functionings: *(Able to be and do . . .)*	Teacher-Generated Constraints: *(Barriers to achievement . . .)*
Community Collaboration *(increase the engagement of adults to meet educational goals)*	Encourage parents and families. Engage parents in the value of schooling. Improve community involvement in developing school infrastructure. Be respected within the community.	Lack of educated community members. Reduced social status of primary teachers.
Compassion & Encouragement *(be an inspiring presence for students)*	Employ positive discipline strategies. Praise students for participation & risk taking. Avoid corporal punishment and shaming.	Oversized classes.
Feedback & Improvement *(reflect & improve on instructional practices)*	Change instructional practices to improve outcomes. Be observed by supervisors and peers. Identify failures and make changes.	None
Interaction & Questioning *(foster interaction with and between students)*	Use active learning strategies. Engage students in discussion and group work. Decrease passive learning activities.	Lack of student background or aptitude for school. Oversized classes.
Lifelong Learning *(continue learning and growing academically)*	Increase personal knowledge of content. Maintain English-language proficiency. Continue learning new topics and skills. Avoid academic stagnation.	None
National or Religious Duty *(contribute to national or religious goals)*	Fulfill a deeper calling. Contribute to a brighter future. Work in service of others.	None
Opportunities for Advancement *(be promoted or attain another career advancement)*	Achieve promotion in the national school system. Achieve self-promotion through personal efforts to improve education or income. Advance in status through further training.	National freeze on promotions and salary increases for teachers.
Quality of Life *(work and meet basic needs)*	Achieve work-life balance. Provide for family (financially and through household work). Access to quality housing & amenities.	Long commutes & requirements outside of school hours. Gendered expectations. Lack of promotion or salary increases. Lack of quality housing.

Quality Teacher Preparation *(be trained and prepared to meet professional expectations)*	Access to quality initial teacher training. Feel prepared for success in professional work. Be supported in completing the qualification requirements.	Older teachers who started as temporary teachers had no training in their initial years of teaching - not a current constraint.
Responsive & Engaging Instruction *(respond to student's learning needs)*	Use relevant examples and resources. Monitor student understanding during and after lessons. Provide information & activities that interest students.	Limited teaching resources. Student absenteeism.
Student Achievement *(ensure students achieve academic success)*	Students pass school and national exams. Students are accepted to secondary schools. Students are literate. Students can speak English.	Limited space in secondary schools. Limited exposure to English outside of school. Limited teaching resources.
Student Participation *(support students in attending and participating in schooling)*	Encourage attendance at school. Reduce student dropouts.	Poverty, including lack of access to food and clothing. Early marriage. Economic pressures for students to earn income.
Teacher Collaboration *(Share with and learn from colleagues)*	Share strategies with other teachers. Observe other teachers. Share success and failures with others.	None
Teacher Leadership *(have a voice in education practices & policies)*	Be consulted in identifying problems and solutions in the teaching profession. Be involved in development of teaching resources and exams. Be valued by educational leaders as a source of expertise about teaching.	National curriculum mandates made without teacher input. National policies that overemphasize teacher ratios.
Teachers as Role Models *(positively influence the outlook of students)*	Instill a sense of the importance of education. Encourage students to strive for a better future. Raise awareness of a variety of future opportunities and life paths.	Reduced social status of primary teachers. National freeze on promotions and salary increases for teachers.
Teaching Resources *(have space and materials necessary to instruct students)*	Have textbooks and teacher's manuals. Have classrooms and seats or desks for students. Have content materials for teachers (letter cards, yarn, books, etc.).	Limited numbers or textbooks. Limited classrooms and desks. Limited content materials.

Another constraint that impacted multiple valued functionings of teachers was the reduced social status of primary teachers.

"People who go to school want to improve our standard of living, but end up in the village again. Teaching in a village again. You see? You see the house and the village in which you are staying is the same as if you didn't go to school. Life never changes in Malawi. All in my time, it is just the same. You end up in the village. You want to say, 'Oh you should go to school so you can earn a better living,' but once you choose teaching in Malawi you will never get a better standard of living. It never changes."

Naomi's quote above illustrated the constraint of the poor social status of primary school teachers and the social and quality of life constraints that accompany assignment to rural teaching posts. Joyce also articulated this constraint: "They (the community members) don't respect us. Since we receive a low amount of salary, they don't respect us. We live like low people."

Oversized classes were another constraint that impacted a number of valued teacher functionings; student interaction, classroom discipline, resources, and many other functionings were impacted by overcrowded classes. For example, when Sera described her classroom on one of the days the researcher visited, she explained why she wasn't able to interact with her students: "I couldn't even move here or there just because I was afraid to step on the learners." Joyce also felt constrained by the large class sizes: "When you teach so many learners, sometimes the learners make noise and then your temper is always short. To control so many learners, it is not an easy thing." Stella too, felt the constraint of large class sizes as it impacted her ability to

provide individualized support to students: "You can't even give any individual help, you can't, because there are so many."

Family and economic pressures on students also contributed to constraints experienced by teachers, including student absenteeism, lack of student access to food and clothing, early marriage of students, and economic pressures for students to earn income or contribute to the family. Ritta summarized some of these challenges:

> "Some of them says their parents tell them not to come to school, to stay and care for little kids at home. If their mother and dad are going to the farm or going to the maize mill, then the older children will stay to keep the younger ones while their parents is gone."

The teachers often identified hunger and lack of clothing as barriers for students to school attendance, but Lacey clarified that hunger still negatively impacts students who do attend school: "You may teach, but the learner is hungry and can't learn and can't listen. They are thinking 'I am hungry, I want the time to go fast, so I can go home and get food.'" Some of these issues impacted female students more significantly because as girls aged, they experienced greater and greater pressure to take on caretaking and family responsibilities rather than to pursue education. Naomi explained how absenteeism and grade retention impact girls: "Imagine a girl repeating for 2 or 3 times and now she is grown up and she is shy, and she is saying 'I can't have these breasts in Standard 5.' So, they leave - you see?"

Gender role differences in Malawian culture also contributed to constraints experienced personally by the teachers. Ruth shared that

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"Women have more challenges because in Malawi we have this culture of

leaving women with many, many jobs at home. As I have already told you that I

do get up early in the morning at half past three and the man is sleeping, and I

have gone for the water, cleaned, done cooking, I have gone for the bath, so we

do have some challenges on that part. Even when we go back at home, the man

can do some light jobs while you are doing more heavy jobs."

Nearly all of the teacher participants identified the household responsibilities of women

as a constraint of their ability to achieve quality of life and promotions.

Another set of constraints experienced by teachers was related to their lack of

professional agency, including the national freeze on promotions and salary increases

for teachers, national curriculum mandates made without teacher input, and national

policies that overemphasized teacher ratios. At the time of this research, no promotions

had been available to primary teachers for six years and when promotions had been

available, they were rare, salary increases took years to process, and teachers did not

receive information about how they were or were not selected for promotion. Sera, a

newer teacher, saw the ramifications of this practice: "When someone has served for

30 years and does not receive a promotion, she or he is on the same ground, receiving

the same salary as the one who has just joined the teaching profession, that is not

good." Aside from the lack of promotion, teachers were also constrained by lack of

opportunities to lead and influence their profession:

"A teacher is the one who lives with the learners, so if they (educational leaders)

are introducing a certain program, they need to be asking the teacher, 'What can

we do to improve this certain program?' Because if there are going to be

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challenges, it is the teachers that are going to know those challenges, the

challenges of that program. But they just are saying here is a certain program so

come and do this."

This quote from Agnes helps illuminate the teacher's frustration with their lack of input

and leadership opportunities.

Limited resources caused significant constraints for teachers and these limited

resources included lack of textbooks, desks, classrooms, teachers, teaching resources,

as well as lack of teacher housing and lack of secondary schools for their students to

attend. Stella explained the ramifications of some of the lack of resources:

"For Standard 3, maybe they give us 80 (textbooks), but we have 130

learners. So, we say 'You can get this one and you can get different subjects', so

you give this one English, you give this one the Chichewa, you give this one life

skills and so on. But you need for each one of them to have the books, especially

for English, maths, and Chichewa. They should have them at home, so even

their parents can help them."

Esther also noted that even when resources are provided, it is not always done in a

manner that supports student learning.

"In September we are needing pens and notebooks for school and in November

the money comes for these things, and it is the end of the term. By then we have

already been needing those things, so they are not assisting us on time."

As with the identification of the educational values, the constraints were not the same

for each teacher, but the constraints described here were common to a majority of the

participants. Despite the myriad of constraints, each teacher participant did achieve some of their valued educational goals.

Pursuit and Achievement of Teacher-Generated Capabilities

After identifying the constraints on the teacher's ability to achieve valued functionings, it was possible to examine the overall capabilities of the teacher participants to achieve their self-identified values and functionings as related to quality teaching. Figure 4 goes beyond identification of the constraints and delves into the degree to which these identified constraints impacted each of the 15 teacher participants and their capability to achieve the teacher-generated, valued functionings of quality teaching.

The degree to which the constraints prevented teachers from achieving the valued functionings determined the capability of each teacher. A teacher who experienced no constraints when striving to achieve the functionings of an educational value was considered to have "full capability" to achieve that value, meaning the teacher had the agency to pursue and achieve that valued aspect of their practice. A teacher who identified just one constraint in regard to the functionings of an educational value was considered to have "limited capability," meaning the value could still be pursued and possibly partially actualized. A teacher who identified multiple constraints to pursue and achieve the functionings associated with a key educational value was considered to have "no capability" to achieve that valued aspect of teaching. It's important to note that having full capability is not the same as achieving a value; capability indicates the value is free to be pursued.

Teacher-Generated Capabilities	Agnes	Cynthia	Esther	Grace	Joyce	Lacey	Linda	Mary	Mtewa	Naomi	Ritta	Ruth	Sera	Stella	Tamanda	Total: Full Capability	Total: Limited Capability	Total: No Capability
Community Collaboration																5	4	4
Compassion & Encouragement																8	3	0
Feedback & Improvement																9	0	0
Interaction & Questioning																6	4	2
Life-Long Learning																11	0	0
National or Religious Duty																8	0	0
Opportunities for Advancement																0	5	10
Quality of Life																0	5	8
Quality Teacher Preparation																8	7	0
Responsive & Engaging Instruction																3	8	3
Student Achievement																0	7	3
Student Participation																0	4	11
Teacher Collaboration																10	0	0
Teacher Leadership																3	8	2
Teachers as Role Models																6	6	2
Teaching Resources																0	5	9
Total: Full Capability	9	6	5	5	3	4	5	7	5	3	5	4	4	7	5			
Total: Limited Capability	5	6	5	4	4	7	6	3	3	6	3	3	4	2	5			
Total: No Capability	2	2	5	3	6	2	3	2	4	5	5	3	4	4	4			

	No Capability – Constraints Prevent Achievement
	Limited Capability – Constraints Limit Achievement
	Full Capability – No Constraints Impact Achievement
	Not identified as an Important Value

Figure 4. Freedom to Pursue and Achieve Teacher-Generated Capabilities

The constraints uncovered through this research were similar across participants, however there was variation in the degree to which those constraints affected the achievement of each teacher. For example, all teachers experienced constraints related to resources for teaching and none of the teachers had full capability to have space and materials to instruct students effectively. However, five of the teachers still managed to have limited achievement of that value while nine had no capability to achieve that valued aspect of quality teaching. According to Robeyns (2017) this was likely the result of individual differences in the internal cognitive and emotion resources of the participants combined with each individual's set of conversion factors.

Summary

This chapter has explored valued capabilities and their corresponding functionings both in the context of national educational leadership and from the perspective of female teachers in a rural community in central Malawi to address the question: How can the capability approach inform our understanding of teacher quality from both the perspective of educational leaders and practicing teachers? While the common approach to educational evaluation in developing contexts often included deficit thinking about what schools, teachers, and students do not have or cannot do, capability approach allows educational researchers to begin with the question of what are teachers in these contexts are able to achieve. In the case of the teacher participants in this study, a majority had full agency to achieve 6 out of 16 valued capabilities and a majority had full or limited agency to achieve 12 out of 16 valued capabilities.   As the international development community increasingly prioritizes using

locally available resources as the foundation for addressing development needs, the

capability approach can provide an asset-based starting point for assessing quality in

education.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter includes the findings, discussion, and conclusions from this qualitative research study, as well as implications for practice and further research. Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the urgent need for policy that fosters development of quality teachers and identified capability approach as a tool to uncovering valuable, qualitative information about educational development as related to teacher quality in primary schools in rural Malawi. Chapter 2 included a review of literature on topics essential to understanding the research questions, including primary education structures, gender and education in Malawi, and rurality, in addition to information about the capability approach and its application within the field of education. Chapter 3 provided details about the methods and procedures used in data collection and the setting of the study. Chapter 4 presented the findings related to each of the three research questions.

The purpose of this research was to better understand the application of the capability approach as a tool to inform understanding of teacher quality. This study used a qualitative approach to actively explore the valued aspects of the professional lives of teachers in a small community as well as the values reflected in national educational policy and through interviews with educational leaders. Data was collected via interviews, observation and document review to understand teacher quality from the perspective of national educational leaders and from the perspective of primary school teachers in a community in central Malawi. The data collected led to findings about the

valued aspects of quality teaching from the official and teacher contexts, the constraints that negatively impacted teacher's pursuit of valued work, the role of agency in teacher's work, and the differences between the valued aspects of teaching of educational leaders versus practicing teachers.

Statement of the Problem

There is a need for qualitative research that explores the real context in which teachers practice (Bird et al., 2013). The inclusion of teachers' voices and experiences in educational research is necessary to gain a more complete picture of progress within and next steps for education development. Though careful examination of teacher allocation and student achievement is valuable in understanding the state of education in Malawi, additional qualitative research into questions of educational quality is necessary. As evidenced in the review of literature in chapter 2 and further discussed in chapter 4, the recurring theme regarding teacher quality in the developing context, particularly in Malawi, was quantity and allocation of teachers; these issues overshadow broader leadership discussions about the valued aspects of teaching and teachers that improve educational efficacy. Additionally, teachers' professionalism and status are commonly understood through a deficit model in academic studies and policy discourse (VSO, 2006). With this lens, issues such as the impact of rurality, gender, and resource availability on teachers and teaching are automatically problematized. By using the capability approach, this study has provided an avenue to examine and explore issues of teaching quality in a manner that is inclusive of the actual experiences and values of teachers and educational leaders and focuses on the actual pursuits and achievements of teachers]

Research Question 1

Discussion & Conclusions

Research question one was concerned with understanding teacher quality from the perspective of educational leaders; this research identified 16 commonly held values regarding teaching quality. Additionally, examination of documents and interviews from the educational leadership perspective uncovered a focus on teacher quantity over teacher quality, internal conflict within the valued aspects of teacher quality, and raised the question of the implications of teacher's lack of awareness of qualities valued by educational leaders.

One major finding from this research was the lack of common definition or understanding of teacher quality at the educational leadership level. Though this study attempted to dig deeper into the concept of teacher quality and identify the shared values of educational leaders, the insufficient consideration of teacher quality at the national level limited the depth of this analysis. Developing shared definitions for teacher quality in Malawi is an important and impactful endeavor; review of national education policy documents indicated that teacher quality was highly valued but poorly defined. As indicated in national educational policy documents, "it is difficult to find reliable ways to evaluate which teachers are the best and add the most value" (Doc17, MEF, 2014).

The lack of descriptors of quality teaching and teachers was at least in part due to the heavy emphasis on teacher quantity and allocation within national education leadership. Current research in regard to teachers and teaching quality was narrow in focus and favored statistics and analysis of the quantity of available teachers. There

were a limited number of studies that attempt to examine the quality of teaching or teachers in Malawi, and the majority of these had a narrow focus on quality as measured by national and international test scores. National education reports and quality indicators were primarily measured by progress towards decreasing teacher to student ratios, increasing the number of schools, and decreasing the distance traveled by students and teachers in order to attend school (Asim et al, 2017; MOEST, 2015; Ravishankar et al, 2016). The limited Malawian policy that did exist regarding teaching quality were exclusively focused on teacher allocation as a tool to lower class sizes exposing the possibly erroneous assumption that smaller classes would automatically lead to increased educational outcomes.

Analysis of the values of educational leaders in regard to teacher quality indicated some of the identified values were mutually exclusive. For example, educational leaders identified teachers' abilities to reflect on student learning and make corresponding adjustments to instruction as having great value, though simultaneously, they valued teachers using the instructional strategies in the national curriculum with fidelity. This created an inherent conflict because as a teacher takes the valued step of reflecting on student learning and making corresponding adjustments to instruction to improve student learning, she may likely deviate from following the national curriculum with fidelity, and therefore could not achieve both valued aspects of teaching. Within the official context, teachers were both commodities to be counted, deployed, allocated, and re-allocated, yet they were also expected to be complex thinkers who could exercise their own judgement and contribute to national development in meaningful ways.

Recommendations for Future Practice & Research

The lack of a shared definition of teacher quality as evidenced in document review and analysis of interviews with educational leaders contributed to a lack of clarity in the job expectations for teachers and diffusion of the effectiveness of the already extremely limited resources of the educational system. A continued emphasis on creating a shared definition of teacher quality across all educational leadership stakeholders could alleviate some of the incongruities in expectations between different domains of educational leadership that impact and influence teachers and teaching. "Teachers are prepared by one organisation, posted by another, managed by two others, and potentially disciplined by at least two others. There is a need to ensure clear roles and responsibilities for each organisation and a mechanism for co-ordinating them" (Doc16, MESP, 2008).

In addition to the national policies and practices that were concerned with teacher quantity, increased attention to developing quality indicators for teaching and teachers could contribute to increased overall educational quality. For example, all of the teacher participants in this study demonstrated no capability in regard to having the freedom to pursue opportunities for advancement as a primary school teacher. In large part, this is due to limited resources to provide these opportunities at the national level. While the establishment of a shared, national definition of teacher quality will not ameliorate the resource issues which limit teacher promotion opportunities, a connection between the allocation of promotions or salary increases and a teacher's performance in regard to established quality indicators would increase the transparency

in the promotion process and incentivize practices connected to a shared understanding of quality teaching.

An opportunity to further this research would be to include analysis of the degree of teacher awareness regarding the valued teacher functionings from the official context as well as the agency of teachers to pursue the official capabilities. Though the data collected in this study did not include enough information to ascertain if the teachers were aware of all of the valued capabilities and functionings from the official context, it appeared that there were some values from the official context of which teachers may not have awareness. For example, increasing enrollment of students with special needs and providing specialized classes for students with special needs was a valued functioning within the official context, however, at school site 4, the participants were not aware of any resources or classes that would be available to any special needs student who enrolled at their school. Teachers can not pursue or achieve values that they do not have knowledge of, so further analysis of the degree of awareness and agency of teachers in regard to official could increase continuity and efficacy.

Research Question 2

Discussion & Conclusions

The second research question examined the values of female teachers within a community in Malawi in order to discover the values functionings and capabilities of teachers. This study identified 16 common values shared by a majority of teachers working in the same community. These included: community collaboration, compassion and encouragement, feedback and improvement, interaction and questioning, life-long learning, national or religious duty, opportunities for advancement, quality of life, quality

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teacher preparation, responsive and engaging instruction, student achievement, student participation, teacher collaboration, teacher leadership, teachers as role models, and teaching resources. A strong majority of these identified values, 75%, were identified by at least 11 out of the 15 participants, indicating that these values were widely held across the sample population.

It is important to note that there were four capabilities that were shared across both contexts: community collaboration, feedback and improvement, quality teacher preparation, and teaching resources. Though the corresponding functionings were slightly different, these capabilities were highly valued by educational leaders and the teacher participants.   In some cases, capabilities identified by each context were tantalizingly similar, but disparate enough to negatively impact achievement of the capability.

One example was the value of "teachers as trainers" within the official context and "teacher leadership" within the teacher context. While it seemed serving as a trainer of other teachers would qualify as a leadership opportunity and thus satisfy the teacher's desire to have a leadership role, the functionings identified by each context were divergent.   Many teacher participants identified a lack of opportunities to give input in educational development as a constraint on agency to act as a teacher leader, including Ruth who stated: "I think they do not give us a chance to give them our views. They do not give us a chance. For example, when they change the curriculum, no teacher is involved, no consultation with teachers." At the same time, the principal at one of the teacher training colleges felt that teacher's voices were included and valued: "fortunately, this time around people are listening and a lot of improvements have come

from the bottom up" (Intv4, TTCH1, 2018). The data indicated that teacher leadership is valued in the official context as well as the teacher context, but it is not being satisfactorily actualized from the teacher's point of view.

Teachers valued opportunities to have a voice in curriculum decisions and to share their experiences with others, whereas educational leaders valued teachers who would implement a pre-made training curriculum with a high level of fidelity, which by definition, limited the teacher's ability to have a voice or share their experiences. Only 3 out of the 15 participants had full capability in regard to teacher leadership, though having teachers take a leadership role in training other teachers was highly valued by educational leaders.

This example of misalignment between seemingly similar values across contexts illuminated one of the ways in which analysis of teacher quality using capability approach as a lens can lead to actionable steps towards improving educational quality. If national educational leaders were aware of the valued functionings of teachers in regard to teacher leadership, there may be opportunities to make small adjustments to the training model to incorporate one or more of the valued functionings of the teachers resulting in a significant increase in both the teacher capability to achieve a valued functioning and the achievement of the educational leaders' the valued capability of teachers as trainers.

The data from the teacher context shed light onto the status and self-perception of primary school teachers. The teachers actively recognized that primary school teaching was a low status profession. This was evidenced through teacher's personal narratives in which a majority of teachers did not originally intend to pursue teaching as

a career, as well as low pay and lack of opportunity for promotion. Interestingly, the low status of the teaching profession did not stop teachers from feeling that their work was important and valuable.

> "I can say that maybe the community doesn't care for the teachers because of their education background. Some of them (community members) they stopped school maybe even in Standard 1, so they don't know the benefit of school. They don't know the roles of the teacher, because if you can read and write you have to thank who? Thank the teacher!

As evidenced by this quote from Sera and similar sentiments from many teacher participants, low status was understood as a reality, but didn't negate teachers feeling pride in their work and valuing the contribution their work could make to improving opportunities for students.

Another interesting observation from the teacher participant data was the realization that teacher definitions and perceptions of rural vary significantly. In some cases teachers living in the same community and teaching at the same school did not have a shared understanding of whether or not the school or community was considered rural. This was especially school 1 and school 2, both of which were located very near the trading center. For example, Lacey, who taught at school 1 described her teaching career as follows, "I was at the district, so it was not rural, it was urban, but since then I have been at a rural school." Her statement clearly indicated that she viewed her current school placement as rural. However, when Ritta, who worked at school site 2 neat the trading center, described her teaching placement, she had a very different view of the community: "The past years, I was out in rural areas, since I had

joined teaching, it's just the last 4 years I was in a civilized place like this one." Ritta's

statement indicated a different perception of life on the outskirts of the trading center. It

was clear from both statements, that prior personal experience likely has an impact of

teacher's perception of rurality.

Recommendations for Future Practice & Research

Attending to the valued professional actions identified by teachers could provide

new opportunities to positively impact teacher quality, even without the allocation of

additional resources. Though there were some capabilities that were shared by both

educational leaders and teachers, the majority of capabilities identified by each party

were different and analysis of those differences could provide actionable information

about how to improve teacher quality and teacher motivation. For instance, life-long

learning and teacher collaboration were both valued by teachers though not identified

as valued professional practices by education leaders. However, adding structures and

practices that foster life-long learning and teacher collaboration could be initiated by

educational leaders and could be implemented in ways that used little to no additional

resources.

Further research into the valued capabilities of teachers and educational leaders

within a given context should include analysis of the teacher's agency to achieve the

capabilities identified within the educational leader context. This study only included

analysis of the teacher's achievement of teacher-generated capabilities, but the

inclusion of analysis of the teacher's achievement of capabilities generated of the official

context would likely have enhanced the study and allowed for even more meaningful

conclusions and recommendations. Additionally, the example of varied perception of

rurality within teachers living in the same community was another avenue for future research.

<center>*Research Question 3*</center>

Discussion & Conclusions

The final research question included in this study focused on the degree to which teachers could pursue and achieve what they valued in teaching. This agency to pursue what was valued is at the core of the capability approach. It is important to remember that just because something is valued and there are no constraints identified, it does not mean it is achieved, rather it is an indicator that there is freedom to achieve. However, when multiple constraints are present, capabilities become limited or even extinguished.

The degree to which identified constraints impacted teachers varied from one participant to the next. For example, providing responsive and engaging instruction was valued by 14 out of the 15 participants. Three participants had full capability to achieve the functionings attached to this value, eight participants had some limited capability, and three participants had no capability. The theoretical framework for the capability approach as described by Robeyns (2017) anticipates some variation in individual's ability to achieve valued capabilities due to differences in life experiences, character, emotional resources, and other internal resources.

This research uncovered eight major categories of constraints that impacted teachers' pursuit of valued professional functionings and capabilities within a community in central Malawi. The identification of commonalities in the constraints experienced by teachers in pursuit of valued functionings could provide educational leaders with specific information about actual barriers to educational quality in local communities;

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understanding constraints within a community may lead to a reduction in barriers to educational quality. Identification of constraints experienced by teachers would provide opportunities to develop targeted interventions to address those constraints Knowledge of the common constraints impacting teachers within a community could be useful information for facilitators of education.

At first glance, the freedom of teachers to pursue teacher-generated capabilities as presented in figure 4 appeared to be somewhat random, but upon closer analysis there are some patterns that emerge. Overall, the valued capabilities of the teacher participants fell into four major categories: teacher mindsets, teacher behaviors, aspects of the educational system at-large, and aspects of the national socio-political landscape. For example, "life-long learning" and "compassion and encouragement" were the product of teacher mindsets whereas "teacher collaboration" and "relevant and engaging instruction" were both values that were manifested in teacher behavior. The derivation of functionings impacted the degree of agency teachers had to pursue those functionings.

This study found capabilities and the corresponding functionings that derived from the teacher's mindset, such as compassion and encouragement, were the ones which teachers had the greatest agency to pursue and achieve. Conversely, the capabilities with which derived from the larger socio-political landscape, such as quality of life, were the ones which the teachers had the least amount of agency to pursue. The further an action was from the teacher's locus of control, the less likely it is that teachers had the agency to achieve the capabilities. That said, there were some exceptions such as community collaboration, which derived from the larger socio-

political landscape, but had a higher level of teacher agency than other capabilities from that same category. Table 5 visually represents the teacher-generated educational values and corresponding categories.

Teacher-Generated Capabilities	Locus of Control
Compassion & Encouragement Life-Long Learning National or Religious Duty Teachers as Role Models	Functionings Derive from Teacher Mindsets
Responsive & Engaging Instruction Feedback & Improvement Interaction & Questioning Student Achievement Teacher Collaboration	Functionings Derive from Teacher Behaviors
Opportunities for Advancement Teacher Leadership Quality Teacher Preparation Teaching Resources	Functionings Derive from the Educational System
Community Collaboration Quality of Life Student Participation	Functionings Derive from the Socio-Political Landscape

Teacher Agency

Figure 5. Teacher-generated capabilities organized by category.

The functionings and capabilities that derived from teacher mindsets were those over which the teachers had the greatest control; for example, having a personal value of life-long learning was not contingent on support or resources from other sources. Similarly, the capabilities and functionings derived from teacher behaviors were more likely to be in the teachers' locus of control to achieve. For instance, though large class sizes created a constraint for some teachers in actualizing the value of interaction and questioning as a valued aspect of quality teaching, it was within the

teacher's individual control to continue to pursue that instructional strategy despite

constraints that might be present. When pursuing capabilities that derived from the

larger educational system, the functionings were further outside the control of an

individual teacher as in the case with teacher leadership. In order to pursue this value,

the teacher was more dependent on larger systems and structures within their work

environment; while personal agency was still important, it couldn't necessarily

compensate for structures that constrained opportunities for teacher leadership. In the

final category of capabilities and functionings that derived from the greater socio-

political landscape, such as quality of life or the student's participation in schooling, the

teachers' agency to pursue those functionings were the most limited.

In general, greater personal agency in relation to an educational value often

increased the agency of the teacher to achieve that capability. Figure 6 shows the

same analysis of the achievement of teacher-generated capabilities as figure 4, but in

chart the capabilities are organized according to the categories discussed above. As in

the previous chart, the darker colors indicated full capability, light colors indicated

limited capability, and white indicated no capability. When this chart was organized into

the categories that reflect various levels of agency, it was clear that there were more

darker colors (full capabilities) at the top of the chart where teacher agency was high,

whereas the bottom of the chart which contained capabilities in which teacher agency in

low, more than half the boxes were white, indicating teachers had limited or no

capability to achieve the valued functionings. By organizing teacher capabilities in a

manner that accounted for teacher agency, a pattern emerged that indicated that

teacher's capabilities to achieve their own valued functionings was highest when the

corresponding functionings of those capabilities fell closer to the teacher's locus of control.

Recommendations for Future Practice & Research

Further exploration of the common constraints experienced by teachers in rural areas could lead to interventions that support increased educational quality which are more targeted and therefore more effective. By taking inventory of teacher's actual constraints, educational leaders could be more informed about the barriers to improving educational quality. With a more accurate understanding of the actual challenges experienced by teacher, there would be increased opportunities for targeted interventions to address identified barriers. This knowledge could also assist with prioritizing resources and support for primary schools.

Another recommendation for further research is to focus on understanding the variation in individual teacher's agency to achieve valued capabilities. Examining the non-cognitive attributes of teachers who have more agency to overcome constraints could lead to a more in-depth understanding of characteristics that increase teacher's resiliency could be useful in influencing the teacher recruitment and training process.

Teacher-Generated Capabilities	Agnes	Cynthia	Esther	Grace	Joyce	Lacey	Linda	Marv	Mtewa	Naomi	Ritta	Ruth	Sera	Stella	Tamanda	Total: Full Capability	Total: Limited Capability	Total: No Capability
Compassion & Encouragement																8	3	0
Life-Long Learning																11	0	0
National or Religious Duty																8	0	0
Teachers as Role Models																6	6	2
Feedback & Improvement																9	0	0
Interaction & Questioning																6	4	2
Responsive & Engaging Instruction																3	8	3
Student Achievement																0	7	3
Teacher Collaboration																10	0	0
Opportunities for Advancement																0	5	10
Quality Teacher Preparation																8	7	0
Teacher Leadership																3	8	2
Teaching Resources																0	5	9
Community Collaboration																5	4	4
Quality of Life																0	5	8
Student Participation																0	4	11
Total: Full Capability	9	6	5	5	3	4	5	7	5	3	5	4	4	7	5	78		
Total: Limited Capability	5	6	5	4	4	7	6	3	3	6	3	3	4	2	5	66		
Total: No Capability	2	2	5	3	6	2	3	2	4	5	5	3	4	4	4	52		

Legend:

	Description
	No Capability – Constraints Prevent Achievement
	Limited Capability – Constraints Limit Achievement
	Full Capability – No Constraints Impact Achievement
	Not identified as an Important Value

Figure 6. Achievement of teacher-generated capabilities organized by categories.

Summary

This qualitative research study was intended to add to a body of work exploring the potential applications of the capability approach to understanding and influencing educational quality. This study combined a review of literature with field-based data collection and document reviews regarding the valued aspects of teacher quality and the degree to which those valued aspects of teaching could be pursued and achieved. The data collected from teacher participants in a small community in central Malawi provides a case study of the potential benefits of using capability approach to understand the teaching profession and educational quality. The data revealed differences in the valued aspects of teacher quality as seen from the perspective of educational leaders and practicing teachers. These differences, along with the space between the teacher's valued functionings and their agency to achieve those functionings, provided opportunities to analyze and better understand issues of teacher quality in Malawi.

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