

Malawi: Basic Education Programme

Improving the Quality of Teacher Training

The challenge

The Malawian Government introduced compulsory free primary schooling in 1994. As a result, enrolment increased vastly and put an enormous strain on the limited physical and technical capacities of the education sector, even requiring the employment of untrained teachers. Since 1994, the Malawian Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) has worked to improve the sector, and to qualify all primary school teachers, however ongoing population growth continues to put stress on the system and to compromise the quality of education available at all levels.

While the problem of access to education has to some extent been successfully addressed, the quality of education remains largely deficient. Teacher training does not effectively prepare teachers with the skills necessary to enable children to achieve desired learning outcomes. The shortage of skilled teachers remains a reason for high repetition and dropout rates.

Despite the challenges, MoEST considers an efficient education system, accessible to all, as key for social development. Preparing teachers to enable learners to reach their full potential and to contribute to national economic growth, MoEST launched the National Standards for Teacher Education (NSTE) and revised the Initial Primary Teacher Education (IPTE) curriculum.

Our approach

Germany has supported the education sector in Malawi since the mid-1990s. The GIZ Basic Education Programme (BEP) aims to improve the quality of teacher training by addressing some of the priority policy reforms as stated in Malawi's National Education Sector Plan.

BEP emphasizes technical, management and organizational support to build capacities across various stakeholders – MoEST; Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs); Teaching Practice Schools (TPSs) and other education institutions.

To improve the management and quality of primary teacher education on multiple levels, BEP works closely with the respective Ministry departments in Malawi's capital Lilongwe as well as directly with the eight public TTCs across the country.

Cross-cutting topics such as gender equality, inclusion of learners with special educational needs and improving the reputation of teachers are part of the four main activity areas:

1. Institutionalizing internal and external evaluation systems for the attainment of the NSTE.
2. Increasing the capacities of TTCs in implementing the revised IPTE curriculum.
3. Improving the ability of TPSs to provide mentoring and learning support for student teachers as well as building resilience in flood affected areas.
4. Introducing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in teacher training institutions as a tool for teaching and learning.

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Lead executing agency	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
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The benefits

BEP's support for teacher training aims to reduce repetition rates, increase completion rates and improve learning outcomes of primary school children. Aiming for a Malawi that leaves no child behind, contributions are made in a holistic and sustainable manner.



Left: Students take part in a "card collecting and clustering" exercise, observed by their teacher Rodgers Kaliyekha. Rodgers attended a training workshop supported by BEP.

Right: Year Three students in the classroom setting.



Student teachers at Lilongwe TTC construct a map of Malawi that uses seeds, small stones and foil from packaging to mark key geographical features, as part of a lesson on the use of TALULAR (Teaching Using Locally Available Resources).

Ingar Düring
Team Leader
Ingar.duering@giz.de

The successful implementation of the NSTE is the foundation of high-quality teacher training, as they guide TTCs to adopt updated methodologies and management procedures. BEP contributes to achievement of the standards by supporting MoEST and the TTCs in monitoring and improvement planning, as well as in implementation of the curriculum and teaching practice procedures.

The revised IPTE curriculum encourages student teachers to develop habits of independent lifelong learning and promotes self-reflection. The curriculum emphasizes a practice-based approach and increases the focus on student teachers' practical experience within the TTC and in the teaching practice phase at TPSs. BEP supported MoEST's development of the curriculum in the previous phase (2014 – 2018), and now contributes to its implementation by supporting capacity development measures for lecturers.

Training of TPS teachers on teaching methods, inclusion, mentoring and coaching seeks to improve their ability to support and guide student teachers. In response to the flood damage caused to TPSs and other schools by Cyclon Idai in early 2019, BEP broadened its support in this area to include the training of staff on psychosocial resilience, as this is highly relevant for disaster response and future preparedness.

The use of ICT for teaching and learning in the TTCs enables students and lecturers to access the additional resources and use the methods prescribed by the revised curriculum. BEP supports ICT skills development for lecturers and student teachers, as well as the development of an on- and offline library for TTCs and TPSs. BEP also supports MoEST's use of ICT to deliver learning content in new ways, such as through the development and implementation of a blended learning format certificate course (see the example from the field section).

Awareness of the importance of teachers is necessary for generating support for education among the general public. To improve the image of teachers, BEP and MoEST introduced "World Teachers' Day" celebrations where outstanding teachers are awarded, as well as a radio programme emphasizing teachers' roles.

Success factors

The current BEP phase began in November 2018 and builds on successes from the previous phase.

BEP draws on established relationships with its partners on all levels to ensure continuous progress, sustainability and ownership. It holds regular coordination meetings with MoEST and with donors and other organizations working in the field. Along with their public TTC counterparts, representatives from private TTCs are engaged in trainings, material development and information exchanges. BEP promotes sustainability and capacity development throughout all activities. To ensure local applicability and engagement, all plans and materials are developed in a participatory way with partner institution staff.

In the development of material for teacher training, BEP emphasizes the integration of HIV/ AIDS related content and of gender-sensitive and inclusive pedagogy and practices.

An example from the field

To increase inclusion in primary schools, BEP supported MoEST to develop and implement the Blended Learning Course on Inclusive Education (BLINC). The year-long certificate course for teachers on identifying and supporting children with learning difficulties is implemented through an ICT-based learning format. The first cohort of 177 teachers graduated in 2018, and the second cohort is expected to complete the course in early 2021, which is a great success concerning the global goal of leaving no learner behind.

The reaction of the teachers to the new course was consistently positive: One teacher stated that "*curriculum adaptation, resource visit and other interesting topics discussed have improved our knowledge on issues of making our school environment inclusive.*" Another stated that as a result of the course they are becoming "*resourceful and productive ambassadors of inclusive education in Malawi*", planning to further support other teachers in their schools.

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GIZ Basic Education Programme
Samala House, P.O. Box 31131
Lilongwe 3, Malawi
Phone +265 (0) 882 415 412/ +265 (0) 1 776 600

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