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The Decentralization of Services in Malawi: Perceptions of Key Actor Groups on the Devolution of Primary Education

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THE DECENTRALIZATION OF SERVICES IN MALAWI:

***Perceptions of Key Actor Groups on the devolution of primary
education***

A Masters Degree Project

by

Abraham T. Sineta

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of**

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ABSTRACT

This project follows the approval of the decentralization policy which the Malawi government adopted in 1998. The policy requires that all government ministries should devolve their functions from central headquarters offices to district assemblies.

The study focused on establishing different views that key actor groups have concerning this policy and its implementation. The sample of 25 included district managers, Primary education advisors, desk officers, and head teachers, eliciting their views on the devolution of primary education to district assemblies. The study took place in Zomba district with some respondents from outside Zomba which the researcher considered critical. It was a qualitative study and used face-to-face interviews as a method of data collection.

The study offers insights to the Ministry of Education and other policy makers on what is actually happening on the ground so that appropriate strategies for policy implementation can be made. This will ensure that the policy is implemented successfully.

Key findings are that there is a good understanding of decentralization by definition among the key actor groups although some confusion about what practically is involved in decentralization was evident. There were also mixed views about which functions to decentralize. Whilst some respondents support decentralization as a way to improve the educational system, there are other who think otherwise, stating reasons of possible corruption, favouritism and diversion of funds under a decentralized system.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Background

The wave of decentralization has hit Malawi in recent years. Although the Ministry of Education Science and Technology had already been going through some form of decentralization, which according to Fiske (1996) is a form of administrative decentralization, the current move of local government decentralization has brought a new wind of change. The Ministry of Education and other government ministries are now mandated to decentralize some of their functions in accordance with the decentralization policy of the local government act. The local government decentralization in Malawi devolves powers from the central government to district assemblies. It is a kind of political decentralization as explained by Fiske, in which he defines political decentralization as “assigning power to make decisions about education to citizens or to their representatives at lower levels of government. Authority is shifted to include people outside the system” (1996, p. 9). This in Malawi has typically been influenced by multiparty politics, which the government of Malawi adopted in 1994. It is seen as a way of enhancing democracy and good governance where local communities are empowered to make decisions.

In 1994, when Malawi adopted multiparty politics, the Government expressed the desire to decentralize political and administrative authority from central government to the District level. For a long time, the Central government had controlled most of the things like finances and staffing. The district offices had more or less just been implementers of development initiatives that occur in the district.

In terms of decision-making at district level, the local government district administration had very little influence on matters of schooling. The control of education was in the hands of the educational district administration. This started changing under the recent thinking of decentralization.

According to The Malawi decentralization policy booklet released in 1998 by the decentralization secretariat, decentralization in Malawi has been sought as a part of the process of consolidating democracy and as a strategy for realizing the country's development goal of poverty reduction. The government directed a comprehensive review of all decentralization initiatives and this led to the drafting of decentralization policy. It was in October 1998 that cabinet approved the local government act, which enshrines the policy of decentralization.

The Malawi Decentralization Policy; -

- Devolves administration and political authority to district level;
- Integrates governmental agencies at the district and local levels into one administrative unit through the process of institutional integration, manpower absorption, composite budgeting and provision of funds for the decentralized services;
- Diverts the centre of implementation responsibilities and transfers these to the districts;
- Assigns, functions and responsibilities to the various levels of government; and
- Promotes popular participation in the governance and development of districts.

(Malawi Decentralization Policy, p. 2).

The Policy & Investment Framework (PIF) 2001, of the education sector in Malawi has stipulated concerning primary education that:

- Decentralization will devolve responsibility for primary education to district assemblies.
- Primary schools will become full community primary schools through increasing the autonomy of school management committees.

With these two policy statements in the PIF on decentralizing primary education, some implications for the Ministry of Education can therefore be drawn from the Local government decentralization policy. These are:-

- The personnel at district education offices have to join the assemblies and be under the chief executives of the assemblies.
- All technical advice regarding primary education at district levels has to be given by the district education managers.
- The district education managers have to become more accountable for financing of education.
- District education offices have to become centers of implementing education policies in the district
- District offices have to come up with strategies of effectively involving the local communities in school governance and responsibilities.

With such implications for education, several questions may be asked as follows; -

- What are the views of the district managers and other professional staff on this policy?
- How informed are they?
- How much capacity is there to implement the policy?
- What are the likely challenges to be faced on the way?

According to United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) report of June 2001, the foreword from the president of Malawi states that Government approved a national decentralization policy and enacted the local government Act as a constitutional requirement. This was done to enhance good governance, transparency and accountability. It further says decentralization is hoped to answer the needs and aspirations of the people. It also indicates

the possible constraints and fears that decentralization, particularly devolution, brings about. One would therefore ask, what are the fears which people have in the field regarding decentralization? What could be the possible constraints?

If you look at some of the things that have influenced the decentralization of education in Malawi apart from politics, you will observe that among other things is the rapid expansion of primary education due to the declaration of free primary education in 1994. The large number of pupils that enrolled in 1994 made it difficult to manage primary education with the three regional education offices that existed then i.e. North, South and Central. These regional education offices were abolished by government in 1996 and were replaced by Divisional offices to make the system more decentralized.

Also in the Policy & Investment Framework is the notion of community involvement in decision-making on matters of local educational needs. This is in line with the objectives of the local government decentralization policy, which are:

- i. good governance at local levels
- ii. facilitating the participation of the grassroots in decision-making.

(Decentralization Secretariat, 1998)

According to Bloomer (1991), decentralization can take a number of forms. It may only involve moving the administrative apparatus of centralized state systems out from headquarters to local areas or transferring substantial powers away from state itself towards local government, school proprietors or even schools themselves. The question I can pose at this point is, what is the status of decentralization in Malawi especially in the education sector? Bloomer has said that in decentralization decision-making is moved out from central authority and people near the classroom are empowered. There is also a possibility of variations in policy and practice. If I pick the notion of policy variations from Bloomer's

idea, I would pose another question saying, what would be the views of people in Malawi towards this aspect of decentralization in education?

Brief historical background of decentralization in Malawi

Malawi has had some forms of decentralization since the colonial era although the word decentralization was not used as such. Decentralization process in Malawi (2001) reports on a fairly effective system of governance which was established by the British during the colonial era. This system was based on chieftaincy. The chiefs were given some judicial powers to handle local cases. “In addition, through chiefs’ councils formed under the 1933 Native Administrative Ordinance, the chiefs were given powers to collect revenue and make rules for the administration of their areas” (Decentralization process in Malawi, 2001, p. 3).

When Malawi attained its independence in 1964, the then government inherited a local government system which was created by the colonial rulers. This system had two bodies at the district i.e the district commissioner’ office and the district council office. The district commissioner’s office supervised the chiefs but its accountability was more to the central government than to the local people being governed. This caused the formation of district council offices in 1952 alongside district commissioner’s offices, as an attempt to be more accountable to local people. From 1962, these district councils had elected members. The councils formed local education authorities, highway authorities and public health authorities.

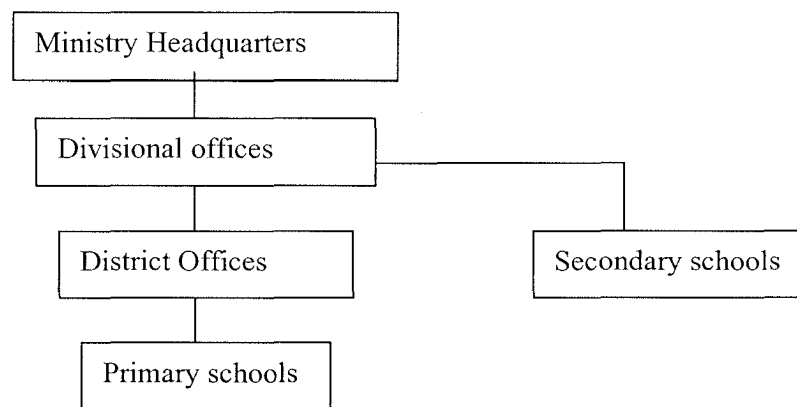
From 1964 to 1994, Malawi was ruled by single party politics and during this period, “the powers and responsibilities of local authorities that included local education, roads and public health management, were gradually transferred to line ministries which in turn established regional and district offices alongside the district councils” (Decentralization process in Malawi, 2001, p. 3).

From 1994 to date, Malawi has been governed by a multiparty system where democracy and popular participation are advocated. This initiated the current wave of decentralization aimed at consolidating democracy and alleviating poverty.

Briefing on the Malawi educational structure

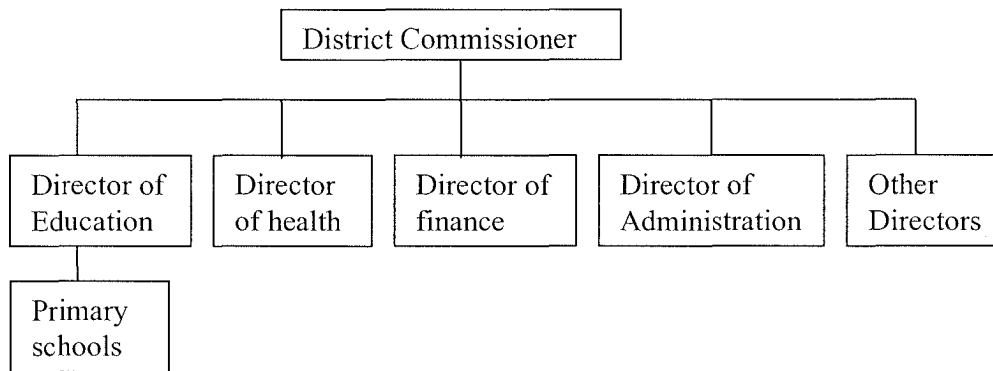
The Malawi educational system is an 8-4-4 system where primary education forms the first 8 years covering standards 1 to 8. Secondary education covers the next four years and the last four years are university education. The Primary and secondary sections are governed by the same structure whilst university section operates somehow independently. The primary schools report to the district education offices who in turn report to divisional offices. The secondary schools report directly to divisional offices who in turn report to ministry headquarters.

Present structure of the primary and secondary sections



Under the current decentralization initiative, it is being proposed that the district education office be combined with the other ministries as directors. These directors will now report to the district commissioner of the assembly.

Proposed structure under decentralization



Statement of research problem

According to Bray (1999) “the words ‘centralization’ and ‘decentralization’ can mean different things to different people” (p 208). This notion of the possibility of different meanings of decentralization posed a big challenge to decentralization process in Malawi. The concept of decentralization could thus be confusing. The problem was therefore that there could be differences in understanding of the concept of decentralization among the key actors at various levels. This could hamper the successful implementation of this initiative. Only when people, especially the key actors in education, understand the concept of decentralization will they be able to support it. There could also be fears and concerns, which normally come with new things and this would affect the initiative too. The UNCDF report (2001) indicates the possible constraints and fears that decentralization particularly devolution brings about.

The other problem was that there was hardly any local literature on decentralization as a concept that could help people learn about it and be exposed to local experience. The concept of decentralization appeared to be a foreign concept. Most literature on this concept was international.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study was to find out various perceptions of the key actor groups, (i.e. District education administrators, desk officers, education advisors) regarding the concept of decentralization in general and decentralization of educational services, particularly the devolution of primary education to district assemblies. The goal was to explore their understanding of this concept.

The study further sought to understand the process of implementing decentralization initiatives in order to describe the present status of the decentralization process in education at the district level.

The study also sought to document the decentralization process in Malawi as an addition to local literature and also as a guide to the policy makers. The study would give insights to the Ministry of Education and other policy makers on how best to implement this initiative.

Research questions

There were a number of questions that this research intended to address. Considering that this concept of decentralization was quite new to Malawi, I posed the following questions.

Firstly, How do key players understand this concept of decentralization? Do they have a common understanding of this concept? It should be noted that this concept could be confusing and only if this confusion is cleared can decentralization be meaningful.

How informed are the key players at District level about the process of decentralization in Malawi? This second question aimed at finding out how much details of decentralization process the key actors have received from higher authorities. It could be possible that even those who are educational practitioners at district level do not know the

details of the process of decentralization. Some might not even know that this process was taking place.

What are the views of the key players about decentralizing some teacher management functions and also the procurement of teaching & learning materials? This third question attempted to describe the current status of selected activities and what key players hoped would happen under decentralization.

Also, what do the key players perceive as challenges to this process of decentralization? What do people see as benefits? What things could be hampering this process and how do people view such obstacles?

Finally, What do people propose as a way forward? The study hoped that these research questions could generate sufficient data to contribute towards these decentralization policy initiatives in Malawi in order to make the education sector more efficient and effective.

Definition of key terms

In this study the following definitions generally applied:

Key actor Groups--- means workers in the Ministry of Education mostly at district level.

These include district managers, primary education advisors, desk officers, headteachers.

Local Government—means the political and administrative structures, which are set by government to administer local development, and political structures at district level.

Central government—means the cabinet with principal secretaries of various ministries.

District—means a geographical area set by government for local administrative and political purposes. It usually has historical significance and cannot easily be changed. At the time of the study, there were 28 districts.

District Assembly—means a group of elected members at a District. These elected members represent wards. Each district assembly is headed politically by a mayor or chairperson

depending on whether it is a city or rural assembly. The district commissioner or chief executive is the administrative head of an assembly.

Educational services—means all those administrative tasks that support an education system.

These include; management of finances, teacher recruitment, construction of school blocks, supply of teaching and learning materials, teacher discipline and pupil discipline.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of related literature

Definitions

Decentralization as a concept has been defined differently by various literature. Welsh and McGinn has defined decentralization as the transfer of power from higher levels to lower levels of a system. In education this “.... is about shifts in location of those who govern, about transfers of authority from those in one location or level vis-à-vis educational organizations to those in one another level” (1999, p. 17). The idea of decentralization as a shift to lower levels appears common in the literature. Bimber (1993) talks of decentralization as a shift of authority for the making of decisions downward, from the center, or top levels, of a hierarchy toward the local or bottom level.

Buaman (1996) defines decentralization in managerial terms as meaning a wider distribution of power and authority in and among organizations. In this definition, one would observe the idea of ‘distribution’ rather than ‘shift’.

The literature also brings the idea of decentralization as a process rather than a static situation. Bray (1999) states that decentralization is a process rather than a static situation. He further suggests that decentralization is a deliberate process initiated at the apex of hierarchies.

The question I would ask is at this point is whether there is any universal definition of decentralization. Hannaway says:

The popular meaning of educational decentralization is very much country-specific. In some Latin American countries with a history of complete centralization of decision-making power in the central government’s education ministry, decentralization is the delegation of powers to the regional offices of the ministry. In other countries, it refers to the constitutional transfer of such power from the central government to regional or local governments. In the United States, which by either of these standards is already highly decentralized, it typically refers both to

deconcentration of the district's central administrative decision-making authority to local school personnel (for example, teacher empowerment) and to transfer authority to elected local school councils. (1993, p. 102).

This explanation by Hannaway brings the notion of differentiating the terms deconcentration and decentralization. Hannaway distinguishes them as, deconcentration to mean delegating some decision-making authority to local agencies of central administrative units whilst decentralization to mean assigning such extensive decision-making responsibility to the elected officials of local agencies. In Malawi, both notions, i.e. deconcentration and decentralization, have existed but possibly at different times. For example, the Ministry of Education had been going through a deconcentration process at the time the new decentralization policy was formulated in 1998.

Fiske talks of three notions of decentralization. These are, deconcentration, delegation and devolution. He distinguishes them as follows;

The weakest form of decentralization is deconcentration, which is no more than the shifting of management responsibilities from the central to regional or other lower levels in such a way that the central ministry remains firmly in control. Delegation is a more extensive approach to decentralization under which central authorities lend authority to lower levels of government, or even to semiautonomous organizations such as churches, with the understanding that the delegated authority can be withdrawn. Devolution is the most far-reaching form of decentralization in that the transfer of authority over financial, administrative, or pedagogical matters is permanent and cannot be revoked at the whim of central officials. (1996, p. 10).

The notions of decentralization being talked about by Fiske seems to be similar to those of Hannaway discussed earlier although Fiske extends to the distinction between delegation and devolution. This notion of delegation has also been happening in Malawi and was very strong in the old (1964) educational act being currently revised. The local education authorities and the church organizations then used to have delegated powers from the Minister of Education to run government and mission schools. Local education authorities

were responsible for 'government schools' whilst churches were responsible for 'mission schools'. Recently, it seems devolution is the kind of decentralization being advocated in the Malawi's 1998 decentralization policy. However, I would wonder whether the key players had or have such distinctions in their minds between these different notions of decentralization.

The literature also discusses the political dimension of decentralization. Fiske differentiates between political decentralization and administrative decentralization. He says, "political, or democratic, decentralization involves assigning power to make decisions about education to citizens or to their representatives at lower levels of government" (1996, p. 9). It is important to grasp this political dimension of decentralization in trying to understand the meaning of decentralization. Bauman says that:

decentralization can be misleading in the sense that it sounds like objective, structural change in an organization. However, it primarily involves shifts in authority and changes in the balance of power between people. Consequently, the political and interpersonal dimensions of decentralization plans must be carefully considered. (1996, p. 112).

Perhaps it is worth mentioning that in Malawi, the political nature of the decentralization process is observed in the sense that the head of each assembly is basically a politician. For example, a district assembly is headed by a chairman who is an elected member among the councillors. Also the councillors representing each ward in the assembly are elected members belonging to a political party.

According to Kotchen and Deutsch (1980), decentralization of services may be viewed in two broad ways i.e. (i) pluralization and dispersion (ii) differential allocation of tasks, decision-making and resources to various hierarchical levels. If I link this with educational services, I would say that localization and dispersion means increasing the number and location of schools.

In differential allocation of tasks, decision-making and resources to different levels would mean, answering the following questions,

- (i) what tasks can each level of the education system handle?
- (ii) What decisions are they allowed to make, i.e. how far in decision making can each particular level go?
- (iii) What is the amount of resources each particular level is able to control?

The answers to these questions would determine the level of decentralization in a particular system. Bloomer says;

decentralization has a variety of meanings. It can refer to the process of delegating central government functions to local government or regional or district structures within government departments. It can refer to the empowerment of individual schools and colleges. Within establishments, it can mean giving greater autonomy to departments and individuals. It can indeed be a process applying at all of these levels simultaneously.' (1991, p. 4).

Zimet discusses the difference between community control and decentralization as he saw it in the United States. He views federal decentralization to mean “ an organizational structure in which semi-autonomous units are guided by a headquarters group, which makes policy and allocates resources among the various units” (1973, p. 154). Such decentralized units have considerable autonomy but “their freedom to act is paid for by adherence to organizational policies” (p. 155). About community control, Zimet sees this as a political decentralization which “involves the transfer of authority to relatively autonomous units whose officials are chosen by the electorate” (p. 155). I view this distinction as very important to Malawi’s situation. In Malawi, the government is decentralizing to district assemblies which are made up of elected members.

Bray (1999) talks of two types of decentralization: functional decentralization and territorial decentralization. He explains that functional decentralization refers to the shift in

the distribution of powers between various authorities that operate in parallel. For example in Malawi, the shift of public examinations to be handled by a separate body like MANEB could be a functional decentralization whilst the government is still controlling it. On territorial decentralization, Bray explains this as a redistribution of control among the different geographic tiers of government, such as nation, states/provinces, districts and schools. So territorial decentralization would mean the transfer of powers from higher levels to lower levels. Looking at these different types of decentralization, I would assume that people in Malawi might not fully understand this concept. When we say that Malawi is undergoing decentralization of educational services, what exactly do we mean? Does it mean territorial decentralization which can also be different in different categories i.e. deconcentration, delegation or devolution? What is the people's expectation of the whole process?

At this point, it is worth noting that decentralization does not mean fragmentation. Kotchen (1980), says decentralization is not fragmentation. Fragmentation no longer forms a system. It should therefore be emphasized that decentralized system still remains a system, with its parts linked by bonds of mutual transactions and interdependence, common tasks of service and common sources and bases of support.

Why Decentralization?

There has been a number of reasons why decentralization has been an important concept in different countries and institutions. Advocates of decentralization have cited a number of reasons as to why governments or institutions decentralize their functions. These reasons range from political/social to systems' efficiency/effectiveness

Bray says, "the motives for centralization/decentralization of control of education are commonly political but may also be administrative or a combination of both" (1999, p. 209). One would observe that one of the key reasons for Malawi to embark on decentralization is

political. It emerges from the multiparty democracy adopted in 1994 even though part of the reason for decentralizing the Ministry of Education was the rapid expansion of primary enrolments due to free primary education which made central governance difficult. Gaynor says:

As education systems have expanded and lessons have been learned in both industrial and developing countries, it has become clear that centralization is not always the best approach for developing and overseeing an effective teacher-management system. Centralized structures have proven to be particularly weak in dealing with day-to-day administrative tasks such as responding to grievances and keeping records. In addition, there has been a shift in societal attitudes towards parents' rights to be involved in their children's education. Changes in public opinion about the role and ability of government and the spread of democracy and popular participation have contributed to this shift. (1998, p. 1)

Welsh and McGinn(1999) agree with Gaynor in saying the reasons for decentralization are both political and efficiency. They say that systems that are bureaucratic have appeared heavy and slow so that decentralization has been seen as offering a means of doing things faster. He also points out that decentralization has been a result of political democratization where people want to be consulted and involved in decision- making on things that concern them directly. A survey on Improving the quality of basic education by the Commonwealth Secretariat argues that "decisions should be made at the lowest possible level in organizations, as close as possible to those who will be most affected by those decisions" (1991, p. 24).

Also, advocates of decentralization have said that this concept is good since it promotes local decision-making and also freedom. " Yet advocates of decentralization in municipal services such as schools, seem to value, not only the autonomy for local decision making in its own right, but also the freedom and dignity they feel to be part of that autonomy" (Kotchen & Deutsch, 1980, p. 6). You would note that decentralization is seen to

promote local decision-making and to allow people some freedom to exercise their rights.

“Decentralization is therefore cast as a reform that increases productivity in education and hence contributes significantly to improving the quality of a nation’s human resources, largely through bringing educational decision making closer to parents’ needs and giving local authorities greater educational decision making autonomy” (Carnoy, 1999, p. 53)

The literature continues to say that if decisions are locally made, then the local needs will appropriately be addressed. Kotchen and Deutsch says, “with equal passion, others have advocated decentralization to bring about greater responsiveness to individual and community needs” (1980, p. 2). It can be observed therefore that a decentralized system would be more responsive to addressing local needs. Stinnette also says that reallocation of power to make decisions at local level “will make schooling more responsive to the unique needs of local communities and will capitalize on knowledge, creativity, and energy of people at school and community level” (1993, p. 1).

This idea of local-decision making under decentralization is critical especially in developing countries like Malawi where communities have so many basic needs. The central government or someone outside a particular community may not fully realize the needs of that community except the members themselves. Bloomer says “...empowering local communities or district authorities can often result in decisions being made on the basis of greater knowledge and in a way which is likely to yield more appropriate results” (1991, p. 3). However, this idea of community involvement in decision-making needs to be controlled as communities may sometimes lack appropriate knowledge to make good decisions. IL-hwan (1990) has pointed out that during the decentralization of educational administration in Korea, some parents and the public lacked the understanding of what the school was doing, as a result they exerted pressure on the school and thereby damaged the school autonomy.

Furthermore, this idea of local decision-making may sometimes result in conflict. For example, if you allow local communities to decide on teacher management issues (e.g promotion, discipline), conflict and corruption may arise. Gaynor (1998) talks of the presence of corruption and political favor in Bangladesh where teacher transfers, promotions and disciplinary measures were decided by the district committee.

Bimber (1994) has stated that decentralization has been one of the centerpieces of education reform in United States under the chief assumption that there is a strong link between institutional arrangements for governing schools and the nature of educational outcomes. Many people believe that decentralization will remove constraints on schools and enable staff to make decisions about instructional matters. This freedom in decision making is hoped to improve student outcomes.

The context of decentralization being described by Bimber is basically school decentralization which may not directly apply to Malawi's decentralization at the moment. The current decentralization in Malawi is focused mainly on shifting powers from central government to districts and not necessarily school decentralization. However the concept is similar in the sense that the main goal of decentralization in Malawi is to improve delivery of services, and in the Ministry of Education, that will mean improving student's learning. It is worth noting that, "to date, however, surprisingly little empirical research is available on the effects of decentralization on school improvement, organizational change, and importantly, student outcomes" (Stinnette, 1993, p. 4). Bauman also alludes to the same issue. "perhaps the most unsettling criticism is the lack of empirical evidence that decentralization plans have any effect on school efficiency and effectiveness or student performance" (1996, p. 115). However, Fiske (1996) says that decentralization can have a positive impact on the environment of education. Despite lack of such empirical evidence, decentralization is still believed to provide ideal conditions for improvement of student outcomes.

Decentralization has also been seen as a strategy to release local resources to support the systems. By involving local communities, it is possible for such communities to contribute resources both in cash and kind. For example in Nicaragua, the teacher management functions have been decentralized to municipal councils composed of various local representatives. “ The municipal council pays teachers’ salaries (with central funds) and is responsible for approving teachers appointments, transfers, leaves of absence, and dismissals, in accordance with relevant central laws and regulations. It also oversees the teacher incentive scheme and issues payments to eligible teachers” (Gaynor, 1998, p. 6). It has been observed that under this model, parents have made voluntary contributions towards payment of such incentives to teachers. These contributions would be unlikely under centralized systems. Also Torres (1997) says that in Mexico, decentralization caused the communities to be more interested in developing their own educational system. It is evident therefore that if communities are involved, they become sensitive to their needs and are motivated to do something about their situation. Their interest to contribute towards the development grows. Decentralization is seen to provide such favourable conditions. Hannaway (1993) has also said that decentralization is seen as a means of enhancing the efficiency of educational governance, both by generating additional resources and by using available resources more effectively,

Even though centralized systems have some advantages like maintaining concentration of resources and consistency of decision making, there are often larger and more serious weaknesses. “ Their liabilities include overload and congestion of their communication channels and facilities with resulting long delays or partial or general breakdowns of the system” (Kotchen & Deusch, 1980, p. 16). So it has been noted that “... Service system catering to a various set of clients with diverse needs is more decentralized with less communicative distance between its clients and the

relevant portions of the system serving them” (p.17). It can be observed that decentralized systems have very short communication channels that are fast, cheap and more efficient in serving the clients. There is also less work overload in decentralized systems. However this work overload may just be shifted to lower levels under decentralized systems as Gaynor said that, “there are considerable workload implications when schools take over responsibility for teacher management. In New Zealand school managers and trustees have experienced an increase in their paperwork since they took over personnel matters” (1998, p. 33).

This idea about work overload is very important to Malawi. It can be observed that the Ministry of Education made efforts to decentralize some of its administrative functions in 1994 following the free primary education policy, which saw a rapid expansion of the primary education sector. This meant too much work for the then three regional education offices. As a result six divisional education offices were created at more local level to try distribute this work overload. This improved the system to some extent but there was still too much work for the divisions.

According to Malawi National Decentralization Policy adopted in 1998, the main reasons why the government decided to decentralize its functions were (i) to consolidate democracy. (ii) as a strategy of poverty reduction through efficient use of resources. Consolidating democracy can thus be viewed as a political reason following the 1994 multiparty politics that started in the country. Efforts under decentralization were made as a way to involve the local communities in decision making. On the other hand, the aspect of poverty reduction was viewed as a goal to meet local needs and decentralization was seen as the most effective way to achieve this goal. However care must be taken to achieve not only the political goals but also development goals. Fiske says, “it is possible to achieve political

objectives through decentralization without having an impact on either the administrative and financial efficiency of the system or the quality of student learning.” (1996, p. 29).

Bauman (1996) gives three general arguments for decentralization in educational settings. These are the redistribution argument, efficiency argument and cultures of learning argument. Redistribution emphasizes the value of power sharing between organizational units of government. On efficiency, it is believed that decentralization will “enhance the cost-effectiveness of the educational system through a more efficient deployment and management of resources” (1996, p. 113). However;

the validity of this argument rests on whether there is going to be a favourable trade-off between loss to economies of scale, on the one hand, and enhanced efficiency in the use of resources, on the other. There is some initial evidence that the balance does indeed come out in favor of a more decentralized generation and utilization of resources, but the overall picture is still not very encouraging. (Hannaway, 1993, p. 63).

In Malawi for example, procurement of teaching and learning materials is centralized and the Ministry of education enjoys the economies of scale by buying centrally. Such economies may be compromised if this function is decentralized to districts. The UNESCO sub-regional report on textbooks (1986) said that in Tonga where books were centrally purchased, sometimes books did not arrive in their destinations especially in the island schools. It further says that in some cases it was found that some schools got more than their share and books got lost or damaged on the way. The question I would pose is whether or not the advantages of decentralizing such a function would outweigh the economies of scale?

On the cultures of learning argument, Bauman says decentralization creates positive environments for greater decision making authority over academic content at school level. Also curricula can be made more relevant to local concerns and community resources can be more easily incorporated into the learning environment (p 113). These arguments are very vital to the Malawi decentralization agenda more especially the aspect of curriculum being

decentralized. According to the Ministry of Education sector devolution plan in Malawi, the curriculum will remain a function of the central office. Probably this is for reasons of maintaining standards and unity as a country. This can be observed as a compromise of Bauman's argument that decentralization would give local levels freedom to make decisions about curriculum. However, the idea to centralize curriculum is in line with centralization arguments. Hannaway talks of standardization as the principle rationale of centralizing. "curricula, qualifications, and examinations need to be reasonably similar across the national or subnational unit, so as to facilitate mobility, the exchange of personnel, the mutual recognition of diplomas across different regions and so on" (Hannaway, 1993, p. 59). Stinnette also cites the same. He says "centralization is meant to ensure equity and uniform standards as well as coordinated delivery of educational services" (1993, p. 5). However, Fiske (1996) says that despite inherent limitations of decentralization, it is still seen as a better alternative as it creates favourable conditions conducive to improved teaching and learning.

Conditions for successful decentralization

Decentralization alone cannot achieve the prospective benefits as cited by the literature. There are several factors that must be considered generally in all decentralization initiatives. There is some empirical evidence from the literature about this.

"Decentralization of education is more successful when it takes place within a context of the life of the country than when it is an isolated adventure in decentralization" (Torres, 1996, p. 154). He cites the decentralization of education in France as an example of educational decentralization taking place within the context of the decentralization by the State on all social services. In Malawi, this can also be observed. The Ministry of Education made some efforts to decentralize its functions before 1998, but its potential impact was not the same as the current decentralization efforts initiated by Government in 1998. The current

decentralization policy includes all public services and looks to have more potential impact than the previous efforts by individual ministries.

Teacher management issues are also very critical in decentralizing education systems. Gaynor (1998) points out the importance of teachers to the educational process and the need for information on their management under decentralized systems. These teachers management issues include professional development, recruitment, promotion, payment, deployment, transfers, discipline, and also the relationship between teachers unions and governments. For example if you consider payment of teachers,

in British Columbia, Canada, for example, where bargaining has been devolved to the school districts, the union opposes any recentralization to the provincial level. But in new Zealand unions fought successfully to maintain central control over teachers pay, arguing that devolution would exacerbate existing inequalities. (Gaynor, 1998, p. 43)

On promotion of teachers, Gaynor has talked of the importance of involving teachers in setting objective promotion criteria and ensuring that they are represented on promotion panels.

Decentralization also must be seen as a systematic transformation rather than a single change in the system. This requires a strong centralized body. “ Successful experiences in decentralization, paradoxically, also require strong central governments. The role of the state changes when profound institutional transformations take place” (Torres, 1997, p. 154). The decentralization efforts in Malawi are being regulated by a central body called the decentralization secretariat. The question of how ‘strong’ this body may need to be explored and defined.

The extent to which local levels can control finances also determines the success of decentralization. If most functions are decentralized to lower levels without appropriately empowering those levels to make decisions about finances, then decentralization may not work effectively. However issues of accountability have to be considered when

decentralizing to lower levels but this should not compromise the initiative. “Budget matters are usually the most tightly controlled in public schools, and are highly resistant to decentralization efforts” (Bimber, 1994, p. 8). Although Bimber is talking about school decentralization, this can apply to other levels too.

Stinnette has observed that too many districts in the United States have embraced the rhetoric of decentralization without doing the tough work of “ (a) redistributing authority over the budgeting process and over decisions about professional development, curriculum innovation, special programs, and other activities, and (b) building the leadership and decision-making capacities for the new roles that decentralization implies” (1993, p. 4). One would therefore draw two conclusions from Stinnette’s observation about important conditions for successful decentralization. These are (i) control of resources by the local levels and (ii) appropriate capacity at the lower level. Lower levels must be given enough authority over resources and they also must be properly equipped. Suppose you decentralize teacher discipline, there is need to develop capacity to handle such issues “decentralizing responsibility for discipline without developing the ability to carry it out effectively will inevitably lead to conflict” (Gaynor, 1998, p.22).

Furthermore, apart from allowing lower levels to take decisions on financial resources, there also must be efforts by government to increase the revenue base for the local assemblies. Torres (1997) talks of fiscal (tax) reform to allow local municipalities to have resources needed as an important reform that must accompany decentralization.

Also, Bloomer says that there must some form of local government or an arm of central government to ensure compliance with national policies and reasonable standards of provision by the local schools. There must be a mechanism of knowing what is happening in the schools. What Bloomer is trying to say here is that though decentralised, there must be a

method of monitoring and ensuring that policies are adhered to by the lower levels. Bauman says that the;

apparent contradiction between centralization and decentralization is based on the assumption that both reforms can not exist simultaneously. However a balance between these two forces can be achieved, based on practical questions of where certain decisions can best be made. (1996, p. 117)

So , this seem to suggest that a pure decentralized system may not be practical. A combination of both centralization and decentralization is the reality but what determines whether the system is decentralized or not is the degree of centralization or decentralization in the combination. However, there is increasing belief that more decentralized systems operate more efficiently and effectively.

Decentralization in Malawi

Following the Local government act (1998) and formulation of the decentralization policy, there has been a number of documents produced to guide the process of decentralization in Malawi. This section discusses the key issues in these documents and their implications on the implementation of this policy of decentralization.

According to the local government act (1998), there are 38 assemblies in Malawi to which government functions will be decentralized to. Of these assemblies, 3 are city assemblies, 1 is a municipal assembly, 8 are town assemblies and 26 are district assemblies. However, the number of district assemblies is likely to change since two new districts were created (i.e Mneni and Likoma districts).

The national decentralization policy stipulates the main objectives of decentralization in Malawi. One of the objectives is to create a democratic environment hence promoting local participation in decision- making. This if viewed in the mirror of the literature is political decentralization and at the same time administrative decentralization. There are also objectives that address efficiency and accountability of the system. The policy also points out

that, “the new local government system will be made up of District Assemblies. Cities and Municipalities will be ‘*districts in their own right*’ ” (1998, p. 3)

A report about the decentralization process in Malawi produced in 2001 stipulates the rationale for the initiative and reports five major factors. These are, abolition of dual system i.e the district commissioners office and the district council office, improvement of coordination between line ministries at district level, promotion of popular participation, and poverty reduction. If I draw your attention to the factor of improvement, you would indeed observe that different line ministries at district level could duplicate efforts by operating individually. For example, the Ministry of Education could run say an AIDS education programme in schools with assistance from an NGO. At the same time the Ministry of health could run an AIDS awareness campaign in the same area or even the same schools. Such duplication could be avoided if one body at the district coordinates the ministries.

Decentralization is deemed to achieve this coordination since all government ministries at the district will be under one assembly.

The report also states the functions and responsibilities that will be assigned to district assemblies as follows:

Educational services;	Medical and health services;
Environmental services;	Roads and Street services
Emergency services;	Public Amenities;
Development planning;	water supply
Land resource utilization;	Business promotion
Community development;	community policing
Natural resource management;	building control
Agriculture, livestock and irrigation; (p. 11)	

According to decentralization process in Malawi (2001), the decentralization policy is supposed to cover the period of 10 years beginning year 2000 to 2010. There are two phases in the first phase. “Ten ministries: Education, Health, Water, Transport and public Works, Agriculture, Gender, Commerce, Housing and Lands are to devolve during the first phase which stars from 2002 to 2004. The rest will devolve in the second phase” (Sector

devolution plans summary report, 2002, p. 4). Also “each affected ministry is required to produce a sectoral devolution plan, which indicates how and when it will devolve the required functions” (Guidelines for Sector Devolution Plans, p. 20). These devolution plans are to act as guides for each ministry.

The Ministry of Education just like all other ministries has since produced its devolution plan. According to this plan, the Ministry of Education will devolve the primary section to district assemblies. The functions to be devolved include teacher discipline, promotion, recruitment, payment of salaries, payment of terminal benefits, procurement of teaching & learning materials among other things. Although it is clear that such functions will be devolved, the extent to which the central office will devolve powers to assemblies on these functions is still unclear in some cases. For example, on discipline of teachers, the sector devolution plan for the Ministry of Education reports under major outcomes of the 1st workshop saying;

this area poses major challenges. There is urgent need to specify what powers of the teaching service commission will be over teachers and what management in the assemblies will be allowed to do over the discipline of teachers. If the teaching service is to remain a national body and is not allowed to disintegrate in smaller portions then the role of the teaching service commission should be maintained and avenue of delegation should be explored urgently. (Sector Devolution Plans, 2002, p. 107).

On promotion of teachers, the functional analysis document proposes that this function would be devolved to assemblies but teaching service commission will be contracted by the assemblies to conduct interviews on their behalf. This will be done to maintain national standards unlike if each assembly conducts its own interviews to promote teachers.

Overall, one may wish to examine the decentralization documents for Malawi critically to judge whether by the end of the exercise, complete devolution will be achieved or whether it will be more a delegation of powers. However, one should also bear in mind that a

decentralized system does not mean a disintegrated system and that different forms of decentralization may be achieved. Both delegation and devolution are forms of decentralization but the degree to which each form is realised determines which system is more decentralized.

CHAPTER THREE

Design and methodology

Overall strategy and rationale

This study used a ‘generic’ qualitative approach. This design was chosen to allow more flexibility to the researcher in trying to understand the people’s views on this somewhat new concept. It should be remembered at this point that decentralization is a new concept in Malawi and many things are not yet clear. It is an ongoing process with many things changing on the way. In trying to understand such a process, one needs to be flexible in designing the study. I felt this approach would help capture as many things as possible. The researcher expected the interviewees to be a source of detailed information. Therefore there was need to create necessary conditions where respondents could be free to express themselves.

Also, there was little local literature on this concept of decentralization. It would therefore be difficult to design a local study that employed more restricted designs. I felt a more open design would be appropriate in exploring the process of decentralization thereby achieving the purposes of this study.

The study employed a face-to-face in-depth interviewing method. This was done to get the in-depth understanding of various views on decentralization.

In addition, the document review method was used to gather more data related to different correspondence on decentralization. Documents reviewed were

- the decentralization policy, the policy investment framework (PIF).
- a report on analysis of functions for devolution towards a sector devolution plan.
- some existing laws to be affected by decentralization policy.
- guidelines for sector devolution plans,
- local government act, and

- sector devolution plan for the ministry of education.

Efforts to get circulars proved futile as it appeared that no circulars on decentralization had been sent from the Ministry of Education at the time of the study.

Sample and sampling procedures

The population targeted in this study was education officials working at district level. This choice was made because this study focussed on decentralization of education and not decentralization in general. The researcher was aware of the importance of targeting other stakeholders (e.g. parents), but these were excluded for purposes of this study.

Also, this study was limited to population at district level because this is the level at which decentralization initiatives are centred. The decentralization process in Malawi is mainly geared towards empowering districts. Targeting the population at district level was therefore appropriate for purposes of this study.

The researcher targeted Zomba district as a location of the study. Zomba is a district found in the southern part of Malawi. It has two educational districts, rural and urban. The rural educational district is far much bigger in size than the urban. At the time of the study, the rural district had approximately 180 primary schools with close to 2000 teachers whilst the urban had 13 schools with approximately 400 teachers. The study covered both Zomba rural and urban educational districts. This district was chosen because it has both the rural and urban settings which would allow the results of the study to represent both perspectives. The other reason is that most areas in this district are accessible considering that this study was conducted during the rainy season where some rural areas in the country are not accessible.

The targeted sample was twenty-five (25) educational officials drawn purposefully. This method of sampling was chosen to be able to get perspectives across different levels of the education system at district level but also some important sections on the Ministry of

Education. It should be noted that although the location of the study was Zomba district, the researcher included some officials from Ministry of education headquarters, Teaching Service Commission, Supplies unit, Division office and district managers from Machinga and Blantyre districts. The reasons for their inclusion were as follows:

- Ministry of Education headquarters was included to solicit their views in the basic education section which is going to be greatly affected by the devolution of the basic education to district assemblies
- Teaching service commission was included since it is a body that currently makes the decisions about teachers' discipline, recruitment and promotion which are crucial under decentralization.
- Supplies Unit was included because it had been making decisions about the procurement of teaching and learning materials which is also considered under decentralization.
- Division office was included because many administrative decisions that affected the districts were made by them.
- District managers from other districts were included to get a fair sampling of views since there was only one manager found in Zomba district at the time of study. District managers were a very crucial group in this decentralization as districts were the main focus of this initiative.

Table 1 showing the sample

Respondent	Number	Level	Location
Headquarters senior official	1	Headquarters	
Supplies unit senior official	1	Headquarters	
Teaching service commission official	1	Headquarters	
Divisional official	1	Division	
District education Manager	3	District	
Desk officer	2	District	1 urban, 1 rural
Primary education advisor	3	Zone	2 rural, 1 urban
Headteachers	13	School	9 rural, 4 urban

Data collection procedures

This study employed interviewing method as a way of gathering data from the field. I decided to use this method in this study to be able to gather rich, detailed data about how people view their world of decentralization, as stated by Rossman and Rallis that, “interviewing is a way to get rich detailed data about how people view their worlds” (1998, p. 125).

Decentralization is somewhat a new concept in Malawi and detailed data was appropriate for any meaningful contribution to the field. This was the reason for using face-to-face in-depth interviewing method.

Because of its open-ended nature, it was hoped that this method would help capture some important information, which the researcher could not have anticipated. However, the researcher was careful to control the study by developing questions based on pre-determined categories. These categories were drawn from the devolution plan document of the Ministry of Education during document review. The interview questions were pilot tested and necessary adjustments were made before data collection.

The researcher went out conducting interviews beginning from 27th May 2002 and ending on 2nd August 2002. An average of 2 to 3 interviews were conducted per week. Each interview session took 45 minutes on average. All the interviews were conducted at each interviewee's place of work. For supplies unit the researcher had to travel to their offices in Blantyre district and also to district offices for the sampled district managers. For Teaching Service Commission and Ministry of Education headquarters, the researcher had to travel to Lilongwe. The same was to be done to primary school headteachers where the researcher went to each sampled school in the zones. During interviews, questions were asked systematically following the interview guide and interview notes were taken under each section of the guide.

The researcher strived to record the exact words that the interviewees were saying to reflect the liveliness of the views in data analysis. These were properly filed to make analysis easier.

Data analysis procedures

This study used structured analysis by developing themes and categories. To make the analysis manageable and also considering the limited time and resources, I decided to control the study by having specific questions with planned analytic categories in mind. I hoped by doing this the efficiency of carrying out the analysis would be improved. On the other hand, the researcher was flexible to allow any emerging categories. Rossman and Rallis suggests that, in trying to make decisions about data analysis, “try to find a balance between efficiency considerations and the flexibility of your design’ (1998, p. 174).

In this study, data gathered from the in-depth interviews underwent a series of comparisons in order to develop the themes and pull out the concepts. There was a continuous back and forth reference among interview notes, research questions, purpose of study. The process was not linear.

The respondents were given a code number for easy identification. The following table shows some examples:

Table 2 showing the coding of some respondents

Description	Code
Respondent 1 headteacher	R1H
Respondent 2 desk officer	R2DO
Respondent 4 primary educational advisor	R4PEA
Respondent 5 district education manager	R5DEM
Respondent 22 divisional manager	R22DM
Respondent 21 supplies unit	R21SU
Respondent 23 teaching service commission	R23TSC
Respondent 24 headquarters	R24HQ

Note that the number in the code indicates the respondent’s number and the letter indicates the job he/she is doing or where he/she work. Two headteachers for example would be distinguished by the number e.g R1H, R12H.

The responses gathered were put under the pre-determined categories. These responses were further categorized according to common ideas emerging from them. For example emerging ideas under teacher promotion would be ‘remain centralized’, ‘avoid corruption’.

The researcher decided to analyse data at the end of data collection. This was to allow the researcher to concentrate on one thing at a time to avoid unnecessary influences on the data as it was being collected.

Limitations of findings

The results of this study are limited to two educational districts in the southern region i.e Zomba rural and Zomba urban . They can neither be generalized to other districts nor to the whole process of decentralization in Malawi.

CHAPTER FOUR

Presentation of results, data analysis and discussion

Introduction

This chapter covers data analysis and discussion of results. The discussion is integrated in the analysis. There are two sections, A and B. Section A covers the general understanding of the concept of decentralization by the respondents and how this concept was communicated. It also covers the views on the five major management functions considered in this decentralization. These are, teacher discipline, recruitment, promotion, procurement of teaching & learning materials and salary management. Under each function, the analysis looked at the current status, issues associated with the current status and expectations in the decentralized status. Section B covers views of the respondents in five critical areas. These are, the movement of district education offices to assemblies, confidence to carry out the initiative, influence of decentralization to educational improvement, anticipated challenges and suggested way forward.

SECTION A

Understanding the concept of decentralization

The results generally show that the majority of respondents understand decentralization as a shift of powers and management functions to lower levels or as a delegation of some responsibilities to lower levels of the system. According to the literature, this signifies a reasonable understanding of this concept which would mean just the delegation of powers or a complete devolution of powers depending on the extent of decentralization. This agrees with Fiske (1996) who has differentiated the three notions of decentralization which are deconcentration, delegation and devolution. However, there are a

few who seem not to understand this concept of decentralization as one of them said
decentralization means

working together but not with equal rights... (urban head teacher)

Decentralization as a shift of powers and management functions

Most respondents (13 out of 24) defined decentralization as the movement of power and management functions from higher levels to lower levels. By higher levels, they typically refer to central offices or headquarters, whereas lower levels typically districts, even though few refer to schools or zones. These respondents emphasize the concept of autonomy in their understanding of decentralization and they seem to associate decentralization with complete autonomy. This agrees with IL-hwan(1990) who says that consideration has to be made regarding peoples' demands for autonomy and decentralization in every sector. I see that these respondents have a fairly good understanding of the concept although some seem to associate it with only complete autonomy which in my opinion limits their understanding. Here are some statements made by respondents in understanding decentralization in regards to power, management functions, autonomy and levels:

A move where districts management operations will be done at a central place in the district assembly as opposed it be done at headquarters or division office...(desk officer)
.... powers of operation will move from central government to districts. (district manager)

...Giving powers to PTAs, school committee's (rural headteacher)

...The districts will have more autonomy on educational matters regarding primary and secondary education...(primary education advisor)

Decentralization as a delegation of some responsibilities

My data shows that some (9 out of 24) of the respondents understand decentralization as simply a delegation of some responsibilities to lower levels of the system. The higher

offices still retain major responsibilities. It also shows that the majority (6 out of 9) of those respondents understand it as delegation are from high offices, i.e. supplies unit, headquarters, teaching service commission. One respondent said

devolving some responsibilities (i.e. those that involve implementation) to local authority...(senior official)

I see this understanding as fair, however it still indicates some limitations in their understanding. Perhaps those from higher offices are somehow showing their option of a kind of decentralization they would prefer. They would want to remain in control with perhaps just delegating some responsibilities to lower offices. Bloomer (1991) says that decentralization can refer to the process of delegating central government functions to local or to regional or district structures within government departments.

Table 3 showing how respondents defined decentralization

	Shift of powers and management functions	delegation of some responsibilities
Number	13	9
Percentage	54%	38%

Communication of the concept on decentralization

There is a general indication of poor communication to the respondents about the details of this process of decentralization in Malawi. The results show that most respondents heard about this process from the media and friends. It also shows that those who were officially communicated to were those from top level offices e.g teaching service commission, supplies unit.

Hearing from media & friends

Results show that most (18 out of 25) of the respondents heard about the decentralization policy implementation through friends and also through the media, meaning radio and newspapers. These respondents expressed concern, saying that they were not

properly communicated to. They regarded media communication as not official. Responding to a question as to how they came to know about the current decentralization, some said:

I have heard it from friends. We haven't been told actually what is going on. We are just pushed to what we don't know. (rural headteacher)

we just hear from the media and from friends. People are just talking about it. We haven't seen it officially. No written document to inform us. (primary educational advisor)

I heard it through the radios, newspapers. (urban headteacher)

I therefore observe that most respondents were not properly communicated to as key players. Their knowledge about this process of decentralization was as general as that of the public. I feel they needed more detailed knowledge about the process than the general public. Such detailed knowledge could not be effectively communicated through the media.

Officially communicated through workshops

The results revealed that few (7 out of 25) of the respondents were officially communicated through briefing sessions by decentralization secretariat and also by directly discussing it with education headquarters. Most of the respondents who said they were officially communicated to were from higher offices, i.e. supplies unit, teaching service commission and division office, though to some extent the division office appear to have heard this later than expected. None of the head teachers had heard this information officially. I view this as communication breakdown as the message from the top somehow failed to reach the grassroots. However communication through the media helped to bring general awareness of this process. Of those who were officially communicated, some said:

at one time we were briefed at the district assembly DEC meeting. This briefing was conducted by officials from Local government. (desk officer)

we have been discussing with the decentralization committee chairperson in the Ministry of education about which things will we devolve and which things we will not. We have so far given our proposals. (senior official)

Table 4 showing sources of information

	Media and friends	official communication
Number	18	7
Percentage	72%	28%

Teacher discipline

Teacher discipline is one of the functions being considered in the decentralizations process. The current status of this function is that it is highly centralised with the results of this study clearly showing that one top office takes final decisions on this matter. The respondents' expectations of decentralization in this study indicate that changes should be made to move this function to lower levels such as districts and schools. However, there are a few who do not expect a change as they feel that it will not be appropriate.

Current status

Cases referred to higher offices after advice

The results reveal that most of the lower levels, i.e. schools, zones, districts or even divisions, do not take any final decisions regarding teacher discipline. These offices mostly do the preliminary work or may institute temporary measures and would normally refer those cases upwards for further action. Some of the respondents said:

we can give them at least three written warnings before recommending further action by higher offices. We cannot interdict, suspend. We can give them a verbal interdiction. We can sometimes temporarily hold the salary or increment as a disciplinary action whilst waiting for approval from headquarters...(district manager)

I can suspend a teacher temporarily if the teacher fails to produce a lesson plan. I can ask him/her to get ready first. If there are misunderstandings among teachers I have powers to call the disciplinary committee to discuss the issue and resolve it. If say a teacher continues to disobey then I refer the matter to the DEO. In case of male a teacher impregnating a schoolgirl, I call the parties 'involved before the school committee and if need be we refer the matter to the DEO....(rural headteacher)

This, to me, indicates that decisions on teacher discipline are highly centralised. It seems all final decisions on these matters of discipline are made by one top office, i.e Teaching service commission. One respondent from the teaching service commission said,

So far we have been taking final decisions on all teacher discipline. When we receive recommendations from ADC at MoE, we take final decisions either to accept or reject the recommendation...(senior official)

The results also reveal that most of the head teachers get involved in counselling and advising as their major role in teacher discipline. They would then refer cases to higher authorities for disciplinary action. It shows that most of the people who said they played an advisory and counselling role in teacher discipline are head teachers, and a few are primary education advisors (PEAs). I, observe, therefore, these respondents, i.e headteachers and PEAs, are the ones who are in close contact with the teachers and resort to counselling and advisory as an alternative action since their powers on teacher discipline are limited to this role. Here are some statements made by the head teachers:

if teacher is indiscipline, I call him/ her to counsel him/her. If it fails then I refer the matter to the higher authorities. (rural headteacher)

we sit down with the teacher and advise together with the school committee before the matter can be referred to our bosses for further action....(urban headteacher)

It is further revealed that district education offices and divisional offices mostly would play a role of forwarding cases to higher authorities for final decisions. They would not counsel or advise. One respondent from the division said,

We don't take final decisions. When we receive cases from districts we forward such to headquarters for final decisions. If there is a case where the districts have verbally interdicted the teacher, we write a letter of interdiction to the teacher and then forward the case to headquarters. This letter is just preliminary whilst waiting for a formal interdiction letter from headquarters. (senior official)

Issue associated with current status

There are issues that have arisen due to the current system of handling teachers. Most of these issues have contributed to the inefficiency of the system. The results reveal the following issues:

- I. Some cases are delayed due to long time that the bureaucracy takes to solve cases. It takes too long to solve cases because of delays of the bureaucracy. Cases which could have been resolved within a short time end up taking longer time, e.g two years or more. As a result government loses a lot of money paying teachers on discipline.
- II. Some disciplinary actions taken by higher offices on teachers are ineffective because of the distance between those offices and teachers.
- III. Teachers ignoring advice from head teachers and becoming boastful
- IV. Lack of powers of those at lower levels to stop an ongoing indiscipline. They have to wait for those higher offices to give disciplinary action.
- V. Lack of tracking mechanisms of the cases, creating a vacuum of feedback information when it is needed.
- VI. Loss of information due to many stages in the bureaucracy. Because on the many steps followed, sometimes information about a certain case is lost and cannot be traced.

Some of these issues can be seen from the following statements made by the respondents:

Since I came into office I haven't experienced much. But I found some cases worth interdiction or dismissal but I could do nothing. (district manager)

...We sometimes advise the DEM that according to such a case, we feel this teacher should be given this disciplinary action but it is not effective. (primary education advisor)

...I cannot impose any disciplinary action if someone continues to be indiscipline. (rural headteacher)

smaller issues we can deduct salary. Otherwise we refer matters to the division office. E.g. issue of pregnancy, we gather information and submit such to the division. If someone comes to ask about the issue, we just tell him or her that the matter is at the division office. What happens at the division, we don't know. (district manager)

These issues are consistent with centralized systems where inefficiencies such as delays in decision making and poor coordination have occurred.

I feel that the lower levels of the system, i.e division offices, district offices and schools, have very little powers on teacher discipline compared to their responsibilities. This has to a greater extent caused these levels to fail to control the teachers and monitor teaching effectively. The system is thus inefficient as one respondent said:

These things are difficult in terms of administration. Discipline is not ok. Teachers can ignore advice from the head teacher so the head teachers lack support. Say if a teacher has to be deducted salary, we ask the district office but sometimes the office does not do it. So the teacher boasts... (rural headteacher)

Expectations in the decentralized system

With the current decentralization process, the respondents are expecting changes to improve the handling of teacher discipline. They strongly feel that the lower levels would handle teacher discipline better than those top offices who are very remote to the situation on the ground. However there are still a few who feel that lower level offices would not best handle teachers discipline as they may abuse their powers or their decisions will be undermined by the teachers.

The results show that the majority (19 out of 24) of the respondents would want cases to be handled by either the districts or lower levels. The reasons for this demand are:

- I. To make the system more efficient. Most cases take too long before they are solved.
- II. It would be easier to track down weaknesses of the disciplinary procedures.
- III. This will avoid loss of information which occur due to long disciplinary procedure with the present system

- IV. These are the people who are well conversant with the teachers and will be able to handle their cases better than someone far away in hierarchy (system).
- V. To make the system more effective by executing the appropriate punishment for a given offence.
- VI. To enforce respect of authority at that level by the teachers.

These reasons are consistent with those used in advocating decentralization as Bloomer says, "...empowering local communities or district authorities can often result in decisions being made on the basis of greater knowledge and in a way which is likely to yield more appropriate results" (1991, p.3). Some of the respondents said:

dismissals to be done by districts for efficiency. Delays, which are caused by many stages, make things worse... (rural headteacher)

We have to take it ourselves. We should be able to interdict or dismiss. Reasons are that : (1) one cause of the downfall in education is laxity in the discipline of teachers. So teachers should know that they could be disciplined any time they make a mistake. (2) If cases are referred to headquarters, it takes too long to finally come up with a judgment. Government loses a lot of money paying people on interdiction. People who see this think government is not serious so that committing a crime does not seem to matter very much. (district manager)

we wish to be given powers to do it. I feel that way corruption will be reduced and teachers will be dedicated. (urban headteacher)

Cases to be handled by HQ or higher offices

Even though most respondents indicate changes to the current mode of handling teacher discipline, there are some (5 out of 24) of the respondents who said that the status quo should continue but with some modifications to speed up the process. Out of these 5, three were headteachers and two senior officials from headquarters. They want HQ or higher offices to still handle discipline cases. The following reasons are cited:

- I. To avoid grumbling by teachers who may not be satisfied with the disciplinary action passed on them by their immediate bosses.

- II. To avoid personal enmity, which may be created when a head teacher passes a judgement on his/her fellow teacher whom he/she is close with.
- III. To make a decision acceptable as they carry more weight if passed by higher authorities. Juniors tend to accept judgement by high authorities than from immediate bosses
- IV. To avoid abuse of power by lower levels in passing judgements on discipline.

I notice that bringing such decision-making powers to the lower levels like schools would be an effective solution but not as an immediate action. A modification to move it to some lower level like a division would be more appropriate at this time whilst the schools develop and prepare to take over in future. “Decentralizing responsibility for discipline without developing the ability to carry it out effectively will inevitably lead to conflict” (Gaynor, 1998, p. 22). Some respondents said:

higher authorities should still make final decisions. A decision passed by such is acceptable by people. If head teachers can make decisions this can create boastfulness on the part of the head teacher and enmity, as teachers may not like the decisions by their head teachers. (rural headteacher)

This should continue as it is. Because the way it is handled people feel satisfied with the final decisions and say it is fair. If this can change, people may be reporting fake things against each other. There can be some biases. (rural headteacher)

Table 5 showing how respondents want teachers discipline cases to be handled

	Cases to be handled by districts or lower levels	Cases to be handled by headquarters or higher levels
Number	19	5
Percentage	79%	21%

Recruitment of teachers

The study investigated teacher recruitment as one of the crucial functions in decentralization. The results generally show that this function is currently highly centralised

with minimal involvement of district managers in some recruitment interview panels. The majority of the respondents from the lower levels actually said that they are not involved in recruitment. The respondents therefore hope that this function will move to lower levels in the decentralised system.

Current Status

The results show that this function is highly centralised. The majority (22 out of 24) of the respondents indicated that they do not play any role except that of communicating information of shortfall or just sending enrolment returns to higher authorities. Some respondents said:

we only do a little on that. We just inform the Ministry on our shortfalls. (desk officer)

it is outside the jurisdiction of the district education manager to recruit. Despite the shortage, I can only report the vacancies but not recruit. (district manager)

Hannaway confirms this by saying, “in a highly centralised country, the central government (through either the education ministry or the civil service ministry) recruits, appoints, promotes and moves teachers” (1993, p. 111). I see the results of this study confirming the centrality of this function, which in Malawi is done by the teaching service commission even though sometimes the district managers are included in the interviewing panel. Only a few (2 out of 22) of the respondents reported to sometimes assist during interviews of recruiting by being on the panel. One respondent said:

...We only assist during interviews as a ministry's representative on the recruitment panel... (district manager)

Issues associated with current status

Several issues have arisen due to the centrality of teacher recruitment in Malawi. The results reveal the following issues:

- I. Acute shortage of teachers in rural areas since some teachers refuse to be posted to those rural areas after being recruited. When the teaching service commission receives applications from individuals, it normally comes up with a final list of those to be interviewed. This list may not represent all the areas in the district. As a result, an individual may be recruited from one area of the district and refuse to be posted to another area. This usually is the case when such an area is very remote. Such a remote area will thus suffer shortage of teachers.
- II. Accommodation problems as teachers are recruited somewhere and posted to a place where they may not find good accommodation.
- III. Also wrong recruitment has occurred sometimes. People without good characters have sometimes been recruited since TSC may not know their day-to-day life.

Here are some quotes supporting this:

... We just receive the teachers. Maybe that is why we have shortage of teachers in rural areas. (rural headteacher)

... TSC do not know the local conditions and the teachers recruited by them sometimes do not stay in an area when posted just because they don't like the area. (rural headteacher)

... Teachers recruited from somewhere have problems move to other areas due to transport problems, accommodation. (rural headteacher)

Expectations of a decentralized system

With the current decentralization initiatives, the expectation of respondents is that this function should be shifted to local levels with the major aims of reducing acute shortage of teachers in rural areas and also to improve on the quality of the teachers recruited.

However there are a few respondents who still want this function to remain centralised so as to avoid possible abuse by the local level.

Shift to local levels

The results show that three quarters of the respondents want recruitment of teachers to move to local levels, i.e. district, zone or school level. The following reasons are revealed:

- I. To reduce complaints or refusal of postings to rural areas hence avoiding acute shortage of teachers in these rural areas. It is advocated that local levels will recruit teachers from the local area and, since such teachers are already used to the conditions, the question of refusing postings will not occur. One respondent said:

to avoid shortage of teachers, this should be done at school or zonal level. This will ensure that teachers are recruited around the local area and may not refuse a posting, as is the case now... (rural headteacher)

- II. The districts are conversant with their areas and will ensure equitable distribution of the teachers. It is being advocated that district education offices are closer to the schools than teaching service commission hence know local conditions better. If they can be mandated to recruit, then they will easily meet the local conditions as one respondent said:

This is because the district works directly with the PEAs and will make sure that teachers are recruited within a certain locality. TSC just recruits from somewhere and sometimes teachers refuse to be posted elsewhere especially in rural areas. (desk officer)

- III. To ensure that people of good character are recruited. It is said that, due to limited knowledge of one's behaviour in a local society, teaching service commission may recruit someone with bad morals according to the standards of that particular society. Such a teacher may not be effective in that society. If recruited locally, such discrepancies will be eliminated.
- IV. To alleviate teacher accommodation problems as local recruitment will ensure that teachers operate from their homes.
- V. To make the recruitment process faster. Teaching service commission sometimes takes a long time to interview teachers to be recruited since it covers the whole country. Local levels are smaller and therefore will not take much time.
- VI. It will ensure districts' own standards in recruiting teachers

I feel the reasons to move the function of teacher recruitment to local level expressed by the respondents are valid, to a certain extent. For example, the issue of shortage of teachers is not fully caused by refusal of postings by teachers. Some shortages are due to fewer teacher establishments at district level, which does not match the rapid increase of enrolment. The system might not have fully coped with the rapid expansion of primary enrolment due to free primary education. So, where such shortages are caused by some other factors other than refusal of posting by teachers, local recruitment may not be the solution. However, local recruitment will assist to minimise teacher shortage where such was caused by refusal of posting by the teachers.

Remain centralised

About a quarter (6 out of 24) of the respondents indicate that they still want recruitment to be done by higher offices and not districts or lower levels. Out of these respondents half (3) were head teachers and the other half were from higher offices. The following reasons are cited:

- I. It ensures 'fairness' with no favouritism since higher offices acts as independent bodies. They are not influenced by the local conditions, as one respondent said:

.... It will stand as an independent body. Head teachers can be biased. Districts may have limited coverage, as sometimes you may not find enough qualified personnel in the district to take up teaching posts...(rural headteacher)

- II. It ensures a wider area of where to recruit from. Local recruitment would limit the area hence may not find enough personnel to recruit.

- III. Because the higher offices have the expertise to recruit. Lower offices do not have such expertise. One respondent said:

TSC would like to continue recruiting since it claims to have the expertise. It suggests can be contracted by each Assembly when it wants to recruit. (senior official)

Table 6 showing how respondents views the current conditions of teacher recruitment and their expectations of decentralization

	Current Status		Expectations	
	Reporting Shortage	Assist during interviews	Shift to local levels	Remain Centralized
Number	22	2	18	6
%	92%	8%	75%	25%

Promotion of teachers

Promotion of the teachers is one of the critical issues reviewed under the decentralization process of the education system. The results of the study show that teachers in Malawi are promoted if they pass an oral interview conducted by teaching service commission. The lower levels, especially schools, are not involved in any decisions about teacher promotions. They expressed concerns over this method of promotion as it allows some teachers who they consider non-performers to end up getting promoted. They wished they were given a chance to either give input or do the promotions themselves. The district offices also expressed non-involvement to decisions on teacher discipline even though they sometimes get involved as members of the interviewing board.

Current status

Over three quarters (20 out of 25) of the respondents indicate that they are not involved in promotion of teachers. They do not take any decisions.

we do not contribute anything. Teachers just go for interviews. If they pass they are promoted.....(rural headteacher)

nothing that we contribute. It is through the panel by TSC. If the teachers pass the interview then they get the promotion (urban headteacher).

They, especially head teachers, further said lazy teachers in class are sometimes promoted by just cleverly answering the interview questions. The head teachers felt that this happens because the teaching service commission do not know the performance of these teachers in class and may be cheated by just judging the performance at an interview. Gaynor

(1998) has said that many teachers complain that the procedures for promotion are neither transparent nor fair. I feel that promoting teachers by depending on the interview results is very limited and, also as other respondents have said, very unfair to those hard working teachers. I agree with Gaynor, that the teachers should have an input in setting the objective promotion criteria and also ensuring that they are represented on promotion panels. I also think that the input by the head teachers will be an important condition as these see the day-to-day performance of the teachers in class.

Some involvement

About a quarter (5 out of 25) of the respondents indicate that they play some roles in decisions towards teacher promotion. This involvement is mainly to appear on the interviewing panel as a ministry representative.

if I have a chance I might be picked as a Ministry representative at the interviewing panel where they give me questions to ask (district manager)

I feel the inclusion of the district managers in the interviewing panel is a commendable effort in trying to represent the local views as Gaynor (1998) has said that the representation of the teachers at the promotion panels will try to make the process better. What needs to be addressed is whether this representation is adequate. Also the influence of such representation towards the final decision needs to be examined. Some representatives may just be used as figure heads and may not necessarily influence the final decision by the teaching service commission.

Issues associated with current issues

The current method of promoting teachers has caused some issues to emerge. These are as follows:

- I. Teachers who are non-performers in class have ended up getting promoted just because they passed an interview. This has resulted in reducing the morale of some

hard working teachers who might not have been promoted just because they failed interviews.

- II. The hard working spirit of teachers has been compromised, as teachers do not see the need of working hard. After all, they can be promoted by just passing an interview.
- III. Some teachers have stayed on the same position for a long time without being promoted. They have been static in their career just because those who promote are far away.

These issues can be seen in some of the statements made by some respondents as follows:

... However you find that sometimes a teacher who is a drunkard and lazy in class may just be sober the day of interviews and pass. But as such that teacher did not deserve the promotion at all. (senior official)

... Interviews are useless because they allow someone who performs poorly in class to go through and those who perform well in class may not go through. We should depend on production. (rural headteacher)

... Waiting from headquarters takes long. One may stay 7 years without being promoted...(rural headteacher)

Expectations in decentralized system

There are two conflicting expectations which the results of this study show. Although more than half of the respondents expect that this function will be shifted to lower levels, there are some who still want this function to remain centralized. Those who want a shift cite reasons such as to eliminate the possibility of promoting wrong people, to avoid delays caused by the bureaucracy. Those who want it to remain centralised say this will avoid possible abuse and corruption at lower levels.

Shift to lower levels

More than half (16 out of 23) of the respondents said that promotion of teachers should be done by local levels like districts, schools or zones. The shift is wanted for the following reasons:

- I. To promote those teachers who are hard working and performs well in class teaching. This will ensure that the system rewards those who deserve to be rewarded. One respondent said:
should be done by districts after recommendation from PEAs and head teachers. This will ensure that those people who deserve promotion due to hard work should be promoted....(desk officer)
- II. As a way to discourage the promotion of those lazy teachers who may hide in interviews. This will eliminate wrong promotions.
- III. To ensure that teachers are promoted on time. Delays may be caused by the distance of those promoting from the teachers.

Remain Centralized

The results show that about one third (7out of 23) of the respondents would still want the promotion to be done by TSC with a slight modification as follows:

On top of the interview results, TSC should also ask for their performance from duty stations. This should include the conduct. We in the field should actually see that the input from duty stations has been implemented. (district manager)

The reasons cited for keeping this function centralized are:

- I. To avoid corruption and bribery at lower levels as they are under direct influence from the teachers. Local level decisions may be influenced by different interests as respondent said:
...of course promotion of teacher will be difficult under assemblies as corruption and other things may come out. The councillors may have their own interests...(senior official)
- II. To avoid teachers pressurizing the offices for promotion. Teachers who need promotion may exert a lot of pressure on the local levels since such are closer to them. This will be avoided if this function is at a higher level where teachers cannot easily reach as one respondent said:

So TSC should still handle the promotion. We should not do it to avoid pressure from people. (urban headteacher)

Table 7 Showing how respondents viewed the current method of teacher promotion and their expectations in the decentralised system.

	Current status		Expectations	
	Non-involvement involvement	some Involvement	shift to local levels	Remain centralized
Number	20	5	16	7
%	80%	20%	70%	30%

Procurement of teaching and learning materials

The provision of teaching and learning materials forms a crucial part in the delivery of basic education in Malawi. It is one of the functions being considered under the decentralization of education services. This study reveals that the function is highly centralised. The lower levels just provide the data on enrolments and supplies unit does the purchasing and the distribution on behalf of the Ministry headquarters. The expectations in the decentralised system is that, nearly three quarters of the respondents would want this function to shift to lower levels. But there is still a substantial number about one quarter who would want the function to remain centralised.

Current status

The current situation of this function revealed by this study is that, supplies unit takes final decisions to purchase and distribute teaching and learning materials. The majority (22 out of 23) of the respondents said that they do not take final decisions regarding procurement of teaching and learning materials. They only get involved by sending returns or sometimes filling forms of request of materials to higher offices/supplies unit. Some respondents said:

we just give enrolments requirements. It is done by supplies unit. (desk officer)

we don't have the powers. We are just given the T & L materials to distribute. Of course we give the statistics. (district manager)

we just receive. In 1994 we were told to fill forms indicating our requirements, but....(urban headteacher)

Issues associated with current status

The results reveal some issues that have arisen because of the current status regarding procurement of teaching and learning materials. Oversupply and wrong supply are among the main issues featured by the respondents as consequences of the current procedure of procuring teaching and learning materials. These issues are:

- I. Delay in supply to schools when they need the materials
- II. Oversupplying of some materials at an expense of others. This ends in schools just heaping the excess materials
- III. Wrong supply of materials. Schools are sometimes supplied with materials they don't need.
- IV. Loss of materials on the way to schools who get fewer materials than needed. Because of many hands handling the materials in the long chain, some materials get lost on the way.
- V. Lack of care for the materials since there is no sense of ownership and responsibility by the schools.

Some respondents said :

...But sometimes we get more of one type of materials than the other. So you will find that some materials are just staying idle because they were too much whilst we have a shortage of some materials...(rural headteacher)

...Sometimes things get lost on the way due to the long chain and schools suffer by getting fewer materials....(rural headteacher)

.... Those things you are just given seem to lack proper care. (district manager)

Districts should do it after collecting data from schools. Supplies unit takes too long. (primary education advisor)

.... Supplies unit sometimes gives more books than we need. The books are heaped at a school. (rural headteacher)

I feel this state of affairs cannot be fully associated with centralised system. Some of it, for example, caring for the materials, seem to be a question of attitudes not centrality of the function. One would argue, that the attitude changed because of the system but I think this would be difficult to link directly to the system.

On the issue of oversupplying of materials, I feel the system directly contributes as there is bound to be breakdown in communication due to the long chain involved in purchasing. Also the delay in supply should be directly related to the centralised system. Bauman (1996) talks of efficiency as one of the arguments of decentralization. If procurement of learning materials is decentralised, it would minimise delays.

Expectations in the decentralized system

The respondents hope that decentralization will shift the procurement of teaching and learning materials to the lower levels with the hope of improving the system. They anticipate that, among other things, decentralization will enable the system to purchase the right quantities of materials, deliver them efficiently and also enhance the spirit of community responsibility and accountability. However, about one quarter of the respondents want the function to remain centralized. The reasons cited are to avoid misappropriation of funds for materials by the local communities and also to take advantage of the economies of scale.

Shift to lower levels

Slightly over three quarters of the respondents indicate the need to bring procurement of teaching and learning materials to lower level, i.e. districts, zones or school. The results further reveal that most of the respondents would want this function move to district level. A few want the function at school level. The reasons for wanting a shift to lower levels are as follows:

- I. To ensure accurate purchasing. The schools will be able to buy what they need.

- II. To ensure timely supply of the materials. Districts will be able to purchase on time since they are closer to schools than supplies unit.
- III. For easy monitoring of the handling process. This will ensure proper handling of the materials hence avoiding damages or losses.
- IV. To encourage the spirit of ownership and responsibility. If local communities purchase the materials, then they will be able to take care of them.

Responding to the question as to whom do they want to handle procurement, some respondents said:

to be done by districts. This is because districts are closer to the schools than supplies unit, which sometimes supplies the books very late. Districts should be able to purchase on time. (desk officer)

we can buy. Maybe they don't trust us. But if we buy it would be better because we know what we need. (urban headteacher)

Sometimes things get lost on the way due to the long chain and schools suffer by getting fewer materials. In the current system sometimes materials are poorly handled and are damaged. Why not allow the owners to buy? Do you not trust them? (rural headteacher)

Assemblies should be able to buy. This will encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility....(district manager)

I think that shifting this function to lower levels will improve the system especially in making sure that the right materials, in the right quantities are delivered to schools on time. The issue of oversupplying one school at the expense of another is a wastage of the already scarce resources. Materials end up being heaped idle when another school is in great need. For example in Tonga where books were centrally purchased, a UNESCO sub-regional report on textbooks (1986) said that sometimes books did not arrive in their destinations especially in the island schools. It further says that in some cases it was found that some schools got more than their share and books got lost or damaged on the way. I think decentralization will provide the needed solution as local levels will be able to purchase only what they need.

However, this function should be shifted to districts and later to schools.

Shifting this function to schools as of now may not be feasible because the schools do not have warehousing to keep the materials. Also they do not have the personnel to do the purchasing and some schools are in so remote areas that they may have transport problems to purchase on their own. But in the long run, I feel schools would be the best level to purchase the materials as they know what they need more directly than anyone else in the ladder.

Remain Centralized

The results show that about one quarter of the respondents still want supplies unit to make final decisions on procurement of teaching and learning materials but expressed the need for more consultations and input by the lower offices. The reasons for this continuation by SU are as follows:

- I. To avoid possible misuse of funds by the lower levels. One respondent actually said:

Supplies unit should continue. It is dangerous that schools should buy on their own because some head teachers may be tempted to misuse the funds...(rural headteacher)

- II. To allow head teachers concentrate on their job of teaching. Procurement of teaching and learning materials by the head teachers in schools may disturb them.
- III. Lack of transport at lower levels to transport the materials. Most schools do not transport and their access to hiring may be limited especially to those schools in the remote areas. One respondent said:

it is better that they should consult us on the materials, which we really need. If we have to buy, we may have transport problems. Supplies unit can still buy but they should consult us. If schools have to buy we also can have problems of too much on us. We can be busy buying and may not have time to teach....(rural headteacher)

The reasons given by the respondents for this function to remain centralised are true to a certain extent as misuse of funds may also be true to centralised systems.

However, I think that central government should set strict rules to ensure that local levels use the funds properly.

Table 8 showing how respondents view the current situation about procurement of teaching & learning materials and their expectations in the decentralized system

	Current Status		Expectations	
	Sending returns & request submission	taking final decisions	shift to lower levels	remain centralized
Number	22	1	16	5
	96%	4%	76%	24%

Salary management

Teachers salary management is one of the vital management functions which is considered under decentralization. This study reveals that this function is administratively decentralised to divisional level but the districts and schools still views this function as centralised. The districts and schools seem to have little control over the payroll, and their roles are limited to that of a paymaster and reporting all salary anomalies to higher offices. The respondents expect that this function will further be decentralized to lower levels. The major reasons stated are to avoid unnecessary delays in paying teachers and also to minimise loss of government money due to long chain of processing the salaries.

Current Status

As paymasters

The results show that (14 out of 21) of the respondents' involvement in salary management is simply to pay the teachers. One respondent said:

the only thing we do is to pay. Normally we have very little to do. We pay the teachers when they have worked for the month. We can recommend salary adjustments to the division office that have the money. We do not have the money so we cannot implement anything. (district manager).

I feel this has eroded some powers of the lower offices to be able to control their staff. Some teachers can deliberately not cooperate with their immediate bosses since they know that they do not control their salaries. They can still be paid anyway.

The system is thus inefficient as teachers can neglect their duty but still be paid. The gap existing between those who have powers to pay the teachers and those who are with the teachers is a source of inefficiencies in the system. This gap needs to be closed and I think decentralization will do just that. However, Gaynor (1998) says that the rationale of central involvement in teachers salary has to do with affordability and equity. This means that if this function is decentralised, it would result in different teachers in different districts paid different salaries. As a result equity will not be there. So I think the solution would be to decentralize the operations whilst centrally controlling the decisions on salary segments.

Reporting role

A few (8 out of 22) of the respondents indicate that sometimes they can recommend to higher offices some salary adjustments for teachers who maybe experiencing underpayment or any other salary anomaly due to one reason or another. These lower offices do not have the powers to solve the problem. One respondent said:

When teachers have complaints regarding their salaries they report to me and I can report this to higher authorities. (primary education advisor).

They can also recommend deletion from the payroll if need arises but cannot implement the decision themselves:

we inform accounts office at the division office to effect any changes on salaries on our behalf. E.g. we can inform them to delete those resigned or died. (desk officer).

I think with issues of salaries, those who have the capability to recommend and are with the teachers should also be given the responsibility to implement so that the system is effective. Otherwise, some excellent recommendations may never be implemented. A survey on Improving the quality of basic education by the Commonwealth Secretariat say that “decisions should be made at the lowest possible level in organizations, as close as possible to those who will be most affected by those

decisions” (1991, p.24). However some mechanisms by the higher offices should be put in place to monitor such operations.

Issues associated with current status

Several issues have arisen because of the current method of salary management. The results show the following issues:

- I. Loopholes in the system allowing some teachers to have their salaries changed without the knowledge of the authority. Sometimes, some teachers have gone to higher offices and have their salary anomalies worked on without the knowledge of their head teachers. This has been a source of some malpractices of abusing government money meant for teachers salary to go into some corrupt individuals.
- II. Delays in correcting salary anomalies or to reintroduce a teacher on a payroll if missed. This has caused some teacher frustrations. Some respondents said:

.... Sometimes when a salary misses, it takes a long time to be reintroduced. It would take up to 6 months. (rural headteacher).

I think these issues contribute to teachers’ frustrations and affect the teaching and learning process in the classroom. You cannot expect a teacher who is not being paid because of the inefficiencies in the system to be teaching effectively. Higher offices are remote to such realities and the optimal solution to these problems is to decentralize the function. Lower offices should be entrusted with the funds just as they are entrusted with the teachers.

Expectations in decentralized system

Most (22 out of 23) of the respondents said that there should be a shift of salary management to lower levels, i.e. district and school levels. The reasons for this shift are seen as follows:

- I. To ensure that things are done on time. This will eliminate unnecessary delays.

- II. Districts are conversant with teachers' problems and will be in a position to assist them better. Cases of teachers not getting paid will be eliminated.

Table 9 showing how respondents view teacher salary management and their expectations in the decentralised system

	Current status		Expectation	
	As paymasters	Reporting role	Shift to lower	Remain centralized
Number	14	8	22	1
%	64%	36%	96%	4%

Summary of section A

There is a general good understanding of decentralization by most respondents but they deny having been officially communicated with about the current process of decentralization except through the media. Their knowledge on this current process could therefore be the same as that of the general public.

The results also show that there are various issues that have risen because of the centralization of many functions in the system. The system has been both inefficient and ineffective in carrying out teacher recruitment, discipline, promotion, procurement of teaching and learning materials and salary management. The respondents expect that decentralization will be the solution to this status of things however there are still some who have conflicting ideas. There are mixed views as to which functions should be decentralized.

SECTION B

Moving to assembly

The current decentralization in Malawi requires that government departments at the district level come under the district assembly. District education offices thus have to move and be under the district or city assemblies. The district commissioner or chief executive will be the top most boss of each district or city assembly respectively. This study show that key players in the district education offices are reluctant to move to assemblies unless their

concerns and fears are addressed. There are a few who ultimately support the move and some who totally disapprove the move.

The results show that 5 out of 22 of the respondents support the idea to move to assemblies. 13 out of 22 of the respondents are just reluctant to move due to some concerns. 4 out of 22 do not support the idea at all. The results further reveal different reasons for either choice, i.e. support, reluctance and non- support. This is as follows:

Support

The results reveal the following reasons for support:

- I. Efficiency of the system will be guaranteed as things will be done faster e.g. decisions on salaries, terminal benefits. One respondent said:

*I don't think this will be different from what it was in the past. We used to be under district councils and things were faster and efficient.
(rural headteacher)*

Reluctance

The results reveal the following reasons of reluctance:

- I. 'Work overload' of assemblies which may cause assemblies to fail to manage
- II. Priorities of assemblies may be different from those of ministry of education. This will cause education to be affected and go down.
- III. Non-conversant of assemblies on educational matters. Chief executives or district commissioners are not educationists and therefore not conversant with matters in education. This may affect the effectiveness of the system.
- IV. Abuse of power by assemblies. Some members in the assemblies may pursue their own interests at the expense of improving the education system.
- V. Resources to support the system may not be guaranteed. It will be expensive to keep the system going and government may not have enough funds.

VI. 'Resource scramble' may be there among different departments. For example, vehicles which once belonged to ministry of education will have to be shared among all the departments in the assembly.

Some respondents raised their concerns and said:

I feel it is just unfortunate because some of the people at the assembly whom we will be working with may not be conversant with education matters. I feel as a result some decisions may not work well.... (desk officer)

Local assemblies may also misallocate the funds for education to other priorities. Education may thus go down. (urban headteacher)

I think it will be too congested. The district assemblies will not be able to manage all government departments. They will have too much work. (rural headteacher)

I don't have actually direct views because there are advantages and disadvantages to this proposal. For example the districts may fail to pay staff salaries because of lack of resources in that district. It will be good for districts like Blantyre city that are well to do in terms of financial resources. (rural headteacher)

My other worry is transport. Vehicles, which belonged to the district education manager's office, will now be used by anybody in the assembly and hence we can have problems. (desk officer)

I feel such concerns are genuine but they probably are a result of lack of detailed information on how exactly this process will go. For example, the issue of congestion at district assemblies will only occur if responsibilities are given to them without expanding the workforce. Work and decisions previously carried by the central office or division office will now be carried by the assemblies and that will indeed require increasing the capacity of assemblies. Otherwise the assemblies will be overloaded. Gaynor said that, "there are considerable workload implications when schools take over responsibility for teacher management. In New Zealand school managers and trustees have experienced an increase in their paperwork since they took over personnel matters" (1998, p. 33).

No support

The results reveal the following reasons for no support:

- I. Political interference will be common in assemblies
- II. Non-conversant with educational matters by assemblies.

One respondent said:

I don't support that. This will create personal hatred on job also political interference....(urban headteacher)

The issue of political interference in the decentralized system can have adverse effects if no measures to control it are put in place. However, I think it cannot be avoided since political leaders have to achieve their goals too, but a balance need to be achieved. Fiske says, “it is possible to achieve political objectives through decentralization without having an impact on either the administrative and financial efficiency of the system or the quality of student learning” (1996, p. 29). Such a scenario needs to be avoided if we are to improve student learning through decentralization initiatives.

Table 10 showing how respondents view the movement of the district education office to assemblies

	Support ‘those who support it wholly’	Reluctant ‘those who express fears but would still allow it	No support
Number	5	13	4
%	23%	60%	17%

Confidence to implement the initiative

The confidence of the key players to carry out activities in the decentralized system is very important to the successful implementation of this initiative. This study shows that half of the respondents are very confident to handle decentralization whilst the remaining half are either not sure or completely not confident. The study further reveal a number of reasons for either being confident or not.

Very confident

The following reasons were cited for such a choice;

- I. The advantage of past experience. People will be able to apply some of the past experience when district councils were handling educational issues.
- II. Familiarity with one's job. People who were conversant with their work see no problem to decentralise

Some respondents said:

I am very confident. I know what I should do to manage education. Given all the powers I should be able to do it. (district manager)

Yes I am confident. We feel they have done research and have found out how other countries have done it. We also have been at assembly in the past, so we can put some of the old experiences. (desk officer)

Not confident

The main reason cited for this choice is lack of knowledge and how this decentralization process will be implemented. The other reason, which seems to be coming out of the results, is the uncertainty of whether there will be enough resources to support decentralization. Some actually said;

No I am not confident. I could be confident if all necessary needs are there for decentralization i.e. full knowledge of decentralization to all stakeholders including teachers. Enough personnel, equipment. (district manager)

because I don't know much about this issue so I am a bit confused. I don't know where I'm going. We needed civic education before the new system. (rural headteacher)

I strongly feel that lack of confidence expressed by some respondents may limit the successful implementation of the decentralization initiatives. Such people may not support the initiative just because they lack some basic knowledge which could have been easily made available. I feel communication strategies should be devised to address the needs of such group.

Educational improvement

The link between decentralised systems and improvement is a very important link if decentralization has to be anything worth pursuing. Fiske (1996) says that decentralization can have a positive impact on the environment of education despite its inherent limitations. The results of this study show that 9 out of 23 of the respondents are sure that decentralization will improve the system. 10 out of 23 said it would improve depending on certain factors whilst the remaining 4 said that decentralization would not improve the system. The results further reveal different reasons and conditions for such choices.

Reasons for improvement

The following reasons are revealed for being sure of the improvement:

- I. Competitive life among different assemblies brought by decentralization will cause the assemblies to work harder to be the best, as a result things will improve
- II. The system will be more efficient as decisions will be made faster without referring to higher offices
- III. The system will also be more effective as the people deserving promotion will be easily noticed and promoted.

One respondent said:

Yes it will improve. This is because everyone will be fighting to develop his/her district or place of work. It will encourage competitive life. (rural headteacher)

It is reasonable to suppose that decentralization can create conditions that are conducive to improved teaching and learning (Fiske 1996). I think there is greater potential of improvement in decentralized system but it requires certain conditions. Hannaway (1993) says that decentralization as a means of enhancing the efficiency of educational governance, both by generating additional resources and by using available resources more effectively, seems to have some potential.

This study also reveal the following conditions for decentralization to improve the system:

- I. If teachers' condition of service is targeted for improvement then things will improve.
- II. Capacity of assemblies to be improved.
- III. How much 'power' is given to districts is a determinant factor
- IV. How conversant are the assemblies with educational matters is a limiting factor
- V. Whether or not education will be a priority of assemblies is another determinant factor.

This is evidenced by some of the statements made by the respondents as follows:

...If ideas in decentralization are geared towards improving conditions of service for the teachers then yes things will improve but if not then I don't think so. (rural headteacher)

The chances are fifty-fifty. It depends on autonomy given to districts/zones....(primary education advisor)

...I have talked about personnel, financial resources. I don't think assemblies will be able to manage primary schools. Personnel to manage the finances. Looking at how the assemblies manage their funds today, you wonder how they will manage the decentralized system...(district manager)

I have got question marks. Because of financial management, will assemblies not divert the money to other priorities? But the ideas are good if people are serious. (rural headteacher)

I really think decentralization as a concept cannot improve the system. The conditions of operations under decentralization need to be conducive to innovation.

Reasons for no improvement

This study further reveal the following reasons as to why things may not improve with decentralization:

- I. Political interference will affect the system. Some politicians may priotize their political agendas at the expense of improving the system

- II. Past experience showed that this system failed and cannot therefore improve now.
- III. The introduction of many autonomous bodies like assemblies, will limit the advantages we got for being whole.
- IV. Quality and standards will also be compromised by different assemblies.

Some respondents said:

.... The local communities may drag the leaders. (urban headteacher).

...Buying in bulk saves a lot of money since you buy straight from the manufacturer. Such advantages would not be there if districts have to procure on their own.

Also there will be variations in terms of what is bought. Other districts would buy better quality items whilst others would not. As a result some pupils may receive say a pencil that would not last long because it is of poor quality hence free primary education will be affected. (senior official).

... We cannot say improvement and decentralization can be matched. We already tried this system sometime back and it failed. Each ministry began to take back its functions. Funds were diverted for other priorities by the district council. So we wonder whether it will work now. We also do not know whether they did any brainstorming on advantages and disadvantages of decentralization. We also think this was a top down approach and it may not be addressing the practical issues on the ground. I feel we should have closely studied where this system has worked first before we implement it in Malawi. (senior official).

Bauman(1996) talks of the unsettling criticism about the lack of empirical evidence that decentralization plans have any effect on school efficiency and effectiveness or student performance. I think it is important to carefully plan the operations of the education system in the decentralized system to make positive impact. Otherwise improvement cannot be guaranteed.

Table 11 showing how respondents view decentralization and improvement

	Improvement	Improvement on condition	No improvement
Number	9	10	4
%	39%	43%	17%

Challenges

For any initiative, it is important to learn the possible problems/challenges that could impinge on the successful implementation. In this decentralization initiatives, this study reveal a number of possible challenge/problems anticipated by the respondents. These are, lack of financial resources, abuse of power, political interference and diversion of funds.

Lack of financial resources

Some respondents cited lack of financial resources as a challenge to this process of decentralization. They said decentralization is expensive and wondered whether the government will be able to finance it, e.g. :

...Where will government get finances to carry out the services?...(desk officer).

It is expensive... I understand districts will be finding resources on their own. That will be unfortunate because some districts are poorer than others....(rural headteacher)

Abuse of power

Some of the respondents cited abuse of power as a challenge of decentralization. They said people may be unfairly dismissed and that bribery and corruption may exist. This can be seen in the following statements made by some respondents:

if not well monitored, corruption could be there. E.g. on promotions. (urban headteacher)

...There is need to put certain things in place e.g. we must create an opportunity for parents to participate and they must be properly trained, otherwise people may misuse power...(senior official).

Gaynor(1998) talks of the presence of corruption and political favor in Bangladesh where teacher transfers, promotions and disciplinary measures were decided by the district committee. I feel strict measures and guidelines have to be put in place if such functions are to be decentralized effectively.

Political interference

Respondents also said political interference would pose a challenge. Politicians will want their interests addressed at the expense of other things. Some respondents had this to say in about their anticipated problems:

Political problems. Politicians may come on the way. (rural headteacher)

poor community participation and political interference. (urban headteacher)

Bimber says that, “political obstacles to decentralization may also contribute to the poor results so far”(1994, p. 2). I feel this can be a potential obstacle to the decentralization in Malawi. There is need to balance between political interests and the need to achieve positive impact on the educational system.

Diversion of funds

Also, respondents expressed diversion of funds to other priorities by assemblies as a challenge to decentralization:

e.g.. ...There may be diversion of funds due to differences in those governing the districts. We should say the truth here that district policy makers may have different priorities so even if you give them funds to procure teaching & learning materials, they may use them for something else. As a result pupils may suffer and free primary education may be affected in such districts. (senior official).

With the current financial constraints in the assemblies, I feel diversion of funds is a likely possibility. Perhaps strict regulations have to be put in place to avoid this. In addition, there should also be intensive monitoring to see that such regulations are followed. However this has cost implications which must be weighed against the ‘evil’ of diverting funds which on the other hand may just be reflecting the local needs.

Suggested Way forward

With the current multiparty democracy and advocates for local governance, it is important to seek stakeholders’ views on how to proceed in any given programme that affects

them. This study decided to solicit respondents' views in what would be the way forward on this decentralization initiative. The study reveals the following general suggestions as a way forward:

- I. Intensive sensitisation to remove the fears which people may have on decentralization. Some players may have fears because they lack some important information on how this process will be carried out. They do not know the implications.
- II. The process should have engaged smaller ministries before Ministry of Education which is too big and with a lot of problems. Lessons learnt from there could then be applied in decentralizing education
- III. The implementation process should have aimed at piloting some districts before going full scale. "To recognize educational change as a systematic change does not necessarily mean that everything must be transformed at the same time" (Torres, 1997, p.154).
- IV. Consultations with the grassroots should be enhanced. Some people seem not to know what is happening.
- V. There should be enough financial resources provided for this process.
- VI. There should be proper capacity building to all those involved.
- VII. Districts should broaden their financial base. This will ensure sustainability of the system.

As they made suggestions, some respondents said:

I don't think things are going fine. They should seek recommendations from us head teachers. We are the people who can give them information on whether things are going on well or not. (rural headteacher)

Sensitisation must be intensified for people to know what to do. (urban headteacher)

...Have trial districts as opposed to going full scale in devolution. We should see how it could work with such trial districts.

Or devolve smaller ministries first so that we see how it works. Starting with a big ministry as education, which has already got many problems is not good. (senior official).

There should be enough information and knowledge to the people at large. Also solicit more suggestions from people. Also pilot some districts first before going full scale. (rural headteacher)

train competent personnel and also make resources available. (district manager)

These suggestions are consistent with what the literature says. For example, Torres (1997) talks of fiscal(tax) reform to allow local municipalities to have resources needed as an important reform that must accompany decentralization. I feel a political will to release some revenue bases for local assemblies is essential in this initiative.

CHAPTER FIVE

Recommendations and conclusions

Introduction

Having presented and discussed the results of this study, I have come up with at least one recommendation for each of the major topics studied. These topics are, understanding the concept of decentralization and its communication, teachers discipline, recruitment of teachers, promotion of teachers, procurement of teaching and learning materials, and salary management.

Understanding the concept of decentralization and its communication

Even though the majority of the respondents showed good understanding of the concept, they denied having been officially communicated about the decentralization process currently taking place. Most respondents claimed to have heard this from the media which they considered unofficial. Effort should therefore be made to officially communicate the detailed concepts of decentralization being implemented. This will enhance a better understanding of the concept for the key players than the general knowledge obtained from the media. Key players will thus have knowledge above the public and will be able to direct the public better.

Teachers Discipline

With the issues of teachers neglecting duties, cases overstaying and other issues related to inefficiencies, it is important to decentralize this to at least divisional or district level as an interim arrangement with the view of further decentralizing to local committees in the long run. However, there is need to set up strict regulations as a matter of procedure to follow when handling the case. Keeping the function centralized will just continue to lower the standards of teaching in schools as management fails to control the teachers. Gaynor

(1998) has pointed out that in countries where central government is responsible for discipline, delays, misinterpretations, and accusations of unfairness often abound.

Recruitment of teachers

With the current conditions of teacher shortages in remote areas, possibility of wrong recruitment by teaching service and poor living conditions in some remote areas, I propose that this function be decentralised to district level. This move will ensure a compromise between the closeness to the grassroots and also an independent judgement of things. However the number of teachers to be recruited should still be centralised to avoid over-expenditures. Moving the function to school level will be too close to attract corruption when recruiting. In countries such as Colombia and Pakistan where teachers have been locally recruited, it has been common for teachers to be hired on the basis of their political loyalties (Gaynor, 1998).

Promotion of teachers

For the system to reward those who deserve to be rewarded, then the current system of promotion in Malawi must be overhauled. To avoid promoting wrong people and frustrating those who are hard working but not promoted, and considering the sensitivity of this function, I recommend that this function should remain centralized but major modifications have to be made. These modifications should incorporate local input to a greater extent that those local levels should see that their input has influenced the final decision to promote a teacher. Keeping this centralized will ensure an independent judgement when promoting.

One modification would be to allow head teachers to submit names of potential teachers to be promoted with clearly stated reasons of their performance. Teaching service commission should then interview these teachers to determine the promotion. The input from

the head teachers and the performance before the interviewing panel should form the final results to promote someone.

Another modification would be when the head teachers propose the names of those to be promoted, the primary education advisors should monitor the performance of such teachers during their normal supervisory visits. These advisors should come up with their recommendations on such teachers and submit the names to teaching service commission who should do the interviews. The inputs from the head teachers, advisors and the interview results should determine the promotion of someone. The criteria for choosing the names should be developed through consultations with the teachers and all stakeholders at local level. Each teacher and those affected should be conversant with the criteria.

Procurement of teaching & learning materials

The issues of delay, oversupplying and loss of materials on the way are not only undesirable but also expensive. It is therefore possible to have no books in school when there are needed just because of the long bureaucracy followed in purchasing. This study therefore recommends that this function be shifted to districts. This will be close enough to purchase the materials on time and supply the right quantities than central office. However strict regulations have to be put in place to avoid diversion of funds to other priorities.

Salary management

Issues of salary are very crucial as teachers expect to be paid the correct salary at the end of each month. If a teacher is underpaid, or the salary gets missing, that teachers may not work properly. As a result teaching and learning, which is a core mission of any education system, is affected. It is therefore imperative to strive to pay the teachers their dues and, if anomalies occur, they be corrected quickly. This can best be achieved in a decentralised system. This study therefore recommends that this function be decentralized to the districts as a matter of convenience but should consider further decentralization to school level in

future. Teachers are in schools and their salary issues can best be dealt with right there.

Decentralizing this function to school level as an immediate action will be impossible since schools are currently not equipped and equipping them will not only take a long time but also a huge sum of funds.

Table 10 showing a summary of the recommendations

TOPIC	RESEARCH RECOMMENDATION
Teacher Discipline	It is important to decentralize this to at least divisional or district level as an interim arrangement with the view of further decentralizing to local committees in the long run. However, there is need to set up strict regulations as a matter of procedure to follow when handling the case.
Teacher Recruitment	I propose that this function be decentralized to district level. However the number of teachers to be recruited should still be centralized to avoid over-expenditures.
Promotion of teachers	I recommend that this function should remain centralized but major modifications have to be made. These modifications should incorporate local input to a greater extent that those local levels should see that their input has influenced the final decision to promote a teacher.
Procurement of teaching & learning materials	This study therefore recommends that this function be shifted to districts. However strict regulations have to be put in place to avoid diversion of funds to other priorities.
Salary management	This study therefore recommends that this function be decentralized to the districts as a matter of convenience but should consider further decentralization to school level in future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has tried to answer the questions regarding understanding of the concept of decentralization by educational officials and how they came to know about this initiative. The study has also explored the different views which these officials have and what they expect in the decentralized system. Also, different challenges and suggestions to move forward on this initiative have been explored.

The results have generally shown that there is a fairly good understanding of this concept of decentralization among the key actor groups but their knowledge is basically limited. This is because most of them have not been exposed to detailed information about this process of decentralization except that which they have heard from the media and other public sensitisation channels. Their knowledge therefore does not exceed that of the general public even though they are supposed to play key roles to lead the public.

The study has also shown a general welcome of this concept of decentralization. This is viewed as a solution to many problems that the system has faced. The key actor groups hope that decentralization will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system in the areas of managing teacher discipline, promotion, recruitment and payment of salary. It is also hoped to improve the procurement of teaching and learning materials. On the other hand, the study has shown that some actor groups do not think that every function should be decentralized. They have cited teacher promotion and discipline as functions that would cause problems if decentralized. Corruption and conflict have been expressed as potential threats to decentralizing such functions, however, a need for major modifications to the current methods of promotion and discipline has been expressed.

In this study, there has been a general plea for intensified sensitisation of the key actor group about the details of this process of decentralization and also a closer look at the proposed method of carrying out the whole initiative. Those in the leading role should have deliberate efforts to hear voices from the districts and act cautiously if this process of decentralization is to be successful.

Recommendations for future research

I recommend that a comprehensive research sampling more districts be made so that the results can be generalized to all the districts in Malawi. Also detailed studies should be made in each of the major functions studied in this research. These functions are, teacher

discipline, teacher recruitment, teacher promotion and procurement of teaching & learning materials.

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APPENDIX I

Interview Questions Guide

Understanding of the concept of decentralization

- 1) What do you understand by the concept decentralization in general and decentralization of educational services in particular?
- 2) How did you come to know about decentralization of education services in Malawi?

Knowledge of decentralization in the local context

- 3) What kind of decisions are you able to make at your level regarding teacher discipline, salary management, recruitment of teachers, procurement of teaching and learning materials, authorizing payment and writing cheques, budgeting and payment of terminal benefits.
- 4) Which decisions/ things would you like to be decentralized to divisions, districts and school level?
- 5) The ministry of education would like to devolve primary education to district assemblies. What are your views on this? What about personnel moving to district assemblies?

The actors' individual understanding of their role in the process of decentralization

- 6) How confident are you as an individual to contribute effectively to this process of decentralization in your area? Why?

- 7) Do you think decentralization of educational services would improve the delivery of education in your area? Which things would improve and how? If no, why?

Challenges faced by the actors in the process of decentralization

- 8) What do you view as challenges to the process of decentralizing educational services? What would be the benefits? What would be the obstacles to the process?

Suggestions as a way forward

- 9) Describe your suggested way forward to this process of decentralization as a way to sustain or improve the implementation process?

APPENDIX II

Tables used in Data Analysis

Main Category	Subcategory	Description	Items
Understanding the concept of Decentralization	Decentralization as a shift of powers	Those who understand it as a transfer of powers from headquarters to districts or lower offices.	R1H, R2DO, R3DO, R4PEA, R5DEM, R9PEA, R10H, R11H, R12H, R18H, R19H, R20DEM, R25DEM
	Decentralization as a delegation of some responsibilities		R14H, R15H, R16H, R21SU, R22DM, R23TSC, R24HQ
	Not sure	Those who said are not sure what decentralization means	R13H, R17H
Communication of the policy on decentralization	Media and friends	Those who said had heard it from the media or friends.	R1H, R3DO, R4PEA, R5DEM, R6H, R7H, R8PEA, R10H, R11H, R12H, R13H, R14H, R15H, R16H, R17H, R18H, R19H, R25DEM.
	Official communication	Those who said had attended some kind of workshop on decentralization of had received written communication.	R2DO, R9PEA, R20DEM, R21SU, R22DM, R23TSC, R24HQ
Teacher Discipline	Cases referred to higher offices	Cases where advice was given and if failed referred upwards	R4PEA, R5DEM, R8PEA, R10H, R11H, R12H, R13H, R14H, R15H, R18H, R19H.
	Some cases referred upwards	Cases where some kind of action is taken before referred upwards	R1H, R2DO, R3DO, R6H, R7H, R9PEA, R16H, R17H, R20DEM, R20DM, R25DEM

	Taking final decisions		R23TSC
	Cases to be handled at district level or local level		R1H, R2DO, R3DO, R4PEA, R5DEM, R6H, R7H, R8PEA, R9PEA, R10H, R12H, R13H, R14H, R17H, R18H, R19H, R20DEM, R22DM, R25DEM
	Cases to be handled by headquarters or higher office like division		R11H, R15H, R16H, R23TSC, R24HQ
Recruitment of teachers	Reporting shortage “as communication agents”	Sending enrolment returns to higher offices or used as communication agents.	R1H, R2DO, R4PEA, R5DEM, R6H, R7H, R8PEA, R9PEA, R10H, R11H, R12H, R13H, R14H, R15H, R17H, R18H, R19H, R22DM, R25DEM
	Assist during interviews		R3DO, R20DEM
	Shift to local levels	Local levels means districts, zones, schools	R1H, R2DO, R4PEA, R5DEM, R8PEA, R9PEA, R11H, R12H, R13H, R14H, R15H, R16H, R17H, R18H, R19H, R22DM, R25DEM
	Remain as it is “higher offices”	Those wanting things remain as they are.	R7H, R10H, R20DEM, R24HQ, R23TSC
Promotion of teachers	Non- involvement	Those who said have no role at all	R1H, R2DO, R3DO, R5DEM, R6H, R7H, R8PEA, R10H, R11H, R12H, R13H, R14H, R15H, R16H, R17H,

			R18H, R19H, R25DEM
Promotion of teachers	Partial involvement or full involvement	Those who are fully involved or are have some involvement somehow	R4PEA, R9PEA, R20DEM, R23TSC, R24HQ
	Shift to local levels	Those who want the function moved to local levels i.e districts, zones, schools	R1H, R2DO, R3DO, R4PEA, R5DEM, R6H, R7H, R9PEA, R10H, R13H, R14H, R15H, R19H, R22DM, R24HQ
	Status quo	Those who do not want change	R11H, R12H, R16H, R17H, R20DEM, R23TSC, R25DEM
	Which ever way	Those who are indifferent	R18H
Procurement of teaching and learning materials	‘Sending returns’ ‘request submission’	Those who send enrolment returns and some kind of requests	R1H, R2DO, R3DO, R4PEA, R5DEM, R6H, R7H, R8PEA, R9PEA, R10H, R11H, R12H, R13H, R14H, R15H, R16H, R17H, R18H, R19H, R20DEM, R25DEM
	Full involvement	Those who take final decisions	R21SU
	Shift to lower levels	Those who want lower levels to procure e.g schools, districts	R1H, R2DO, R3DO, R4PEA, R5DEM, R6H, R7H, R9PEA, R10H, R11H, R14H, R16H, R17H, R18H, R19H, R20DEM, R25DEM
	Status quo	Those who do not want change	R8PEA, R12H, R15H, R21SU

Salary Management	Paying the teachers (paymasters)	Those who just pay the teachers	R1H, R2DO, R3DO, R5DM, R7H, R10H, R11H, R12H, R14H, R16H, R18H, R19H, R20DEM, R25DEM
	Reporting role	Those who just report salary anomalies	R4PEA, R6H, R8PEA, R13H, R15H, R17H
	Recommend deletion		R9PEA
	Supposed to make final decisions		R22DM
	Shift to lower levels		R1H, R2DO, R3DO, R4PEA, R5DEM, R6H, R7H, R8PEA, R9PEA, R10H, R11H, R12H, R13H, R14H, R15H, R16H, R17H, R18H, R19H, R20DEM, R24HQ, R25DEM
	Reluctant to shift		R22DM