



Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

CONCEPT PAPER ON CAREER PATH FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

May, 2012

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Acronyms

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPEA	Coordinating Primary Education Advisor
DEC	District Executive Committee
DEM	District Education Manager
DPSM	Department of Public Service Management
EDM	Education Division Manager
ESARO	Eastern and Southern Africa Region Office
IPTE	Initial Primary Teacher Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MTPDS	Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support
NSTED	National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEA	Primary Education Adviser
PT	Primary Teacher
SEST	Secretary for Education, Science and Technology
TTC	Teacher Training College
TDC	Teacher Development Center
UNICEF	United Nations Children Education Fund

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (NSTED) one of the strategies recommended for the improvement of the management of primary school teachers is the establishment of a career path in which progression is linked to performance and professional development. A review of the NSTED document in August 2010 identified this still as a priority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). Indeed this was also confirmed by the Secretary for Education, Science and Technology (SEST) in a letter to the Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) program in December 2010. In the letter, responding to the findings and recommendations of the NSTED review report (MTPDS 2010), the SEST also asked the MTPDS program to provide the necessary technical assistance to initiate the process of establishing such a career path. (See Appendix)

During preliminary consultations between MTPDS and the Department of Public Service Management (DPSM) in the Ministry, it was agreed that a concept paper on the career path should be developed which will form the basis for further discussions with more stakeholders. This paper is a follow up to that agreement. Its purpose is to initiate a process that should lead to the revision of the career structure and promotion procedures for primary school teachers.

The paper starts with a brief description of the structure of primary education in Malawi and the structure of an ideal primary school. It then discusses the problems associated with the existing career structure for primary school teachers before discussing the NSTED strategies for its improvement. For each strategy the paper also proposes activities that need to be done. The conclusion gives a list of all the suggested activities and suggests the way forward.

2.0 PRIMARY EDUCATION STRUCTURE

2.1 General management structure

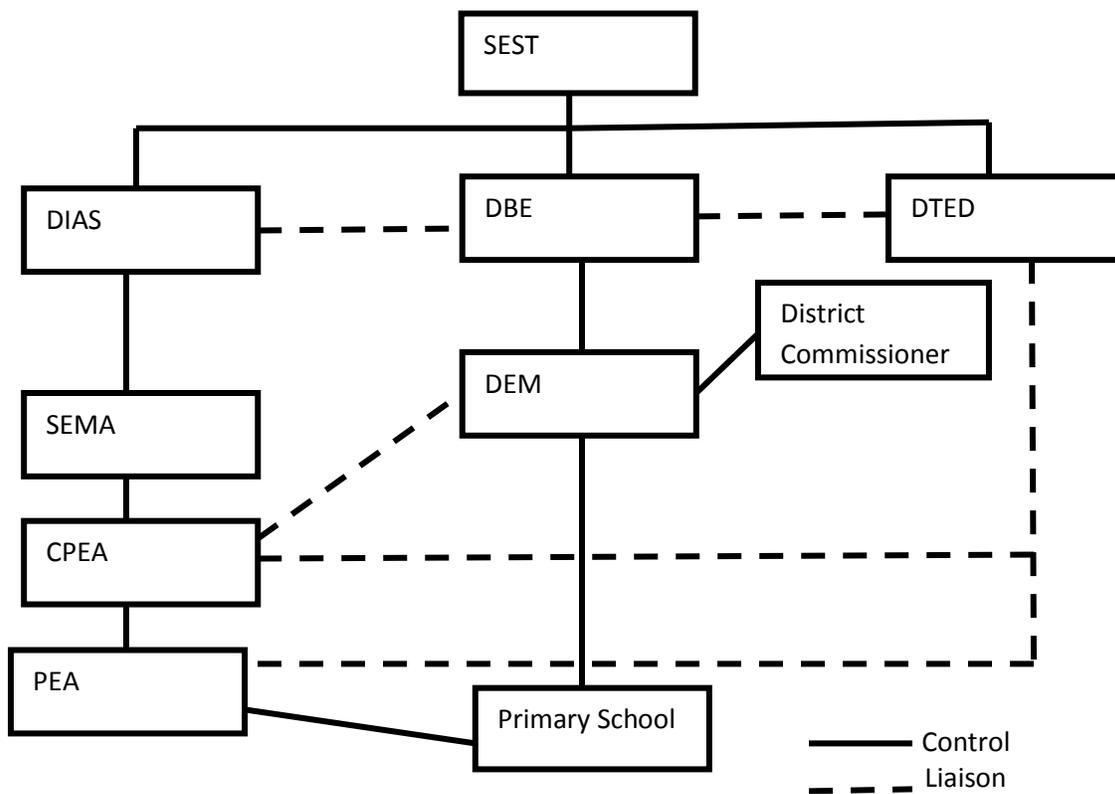
Primary education management in Malawi is currently being devolved to district councils. When the devolution process is completed the district councils will be responsible for all functions pertaining to the *“actual delivery of education services by primary schools”* (MoEST, 2008b, p9) while the ministry *“will retain responsibility over the following areas: policy formulation, policy enforcement, inspectorate, establishment of standards, training, curriculum development”* (Ibid, p8).

Diagram 1 below shows the current primary education management structure. The head of primary education at district level is the District Education Manager (DEM) who is a member of the District Executive Committee (DEC). The DEC is chaired by the District Commissioner who is responsible to the District Council. At the ministry headquarters, primary education administration is headed by the Director of Basic Education who reports to the Principal Secretary. The Director of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS) is responsible for inspection and supervision of the schools through the Primary Education Advisers (PEAs). All education

advisers are under DIAS. Therefore the PEAs report to DIAS through the Coordinating Primary Education Adviser (CPEA) at the DEM's office and the Senior Education Methods Adviser (SEMA) responsible for primary education at the Education Division office.

The Department of Teacher and Development (DTED) is responsible for coordination of the provision of continuous professional development (CPD) to primary school teachers. The department does this through the PEAs. Therefore there is very close liaison between DIAS and DTED. In addition since the teachers are under the Department of Basic Education, both DIAS and DTED work in very close liaison with that department.

Diagram 1: Current Primary Education Management Structure



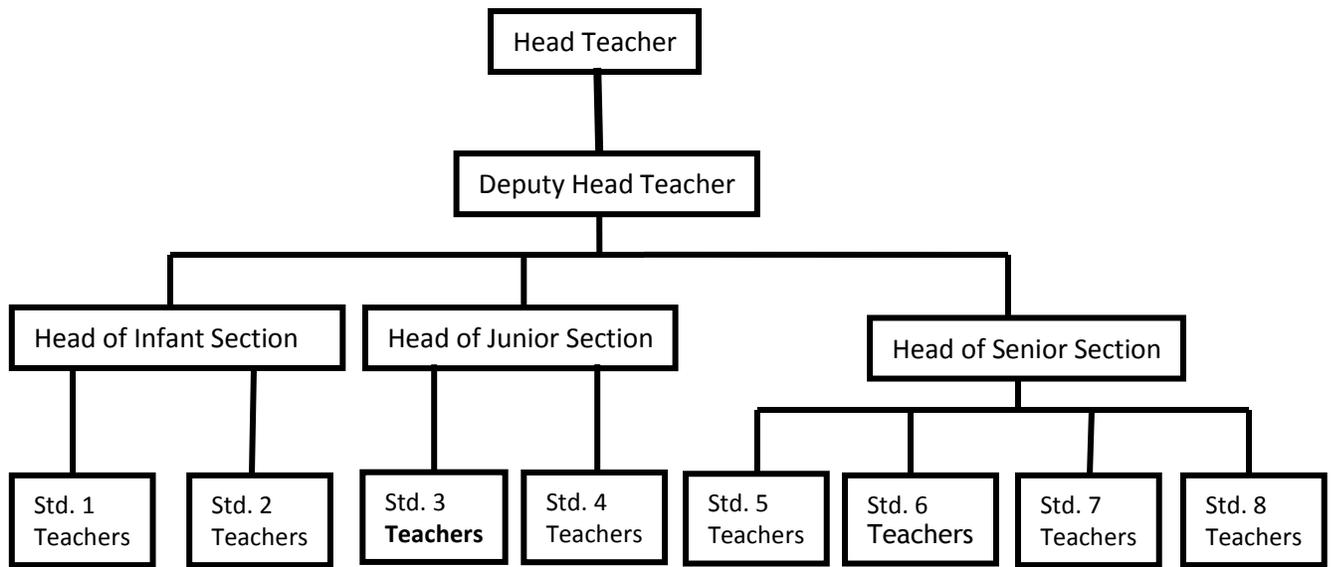
So far only the process of funding for primary education has been fully devolved to the districts. The DEMs get their funding through district councils. The DEM still reports to the Director of Basic Education.

2.2 Primary School Administration Structure

Primary school education in Malawi is an eight-year course. Each year is called a “standard” and the official age for starting primary school education is 6 years. An ideal primary school, therefore, will have classes for Standards 1 to 8. The number of classes for each standard depends on the enrolment for which there is no imposed limit. In general schools in rural areas tend to have low enrolment (usually less than a thousand) while those in urban areas tend to

have high enrolment (usually several thousands). There is no official organogram for a primary school. However, the existing administration structure of a full primary school includes a head teacher, a deputy head teacher and heads of the infant, junior and senior sections. This can be illustrated as in Diagram 2 below:

Diagram 2: Structure of a full primary school



The head teacher reports to the DEM. The number of teachers for each class depends on the enrolment of the class. Officially, there should be a teacher for every 60 learners (MoEST 2011). In practice there are variations from school to school. This structure can be said to have evolved out of necessity rather than by design. Until 2002 the position of Primary school head teacher was not substantive. People were appointed as head teachers administratively against their teaching positions. In 2002 about 1000 P8 positions for primary school head teachers were established (See Section 3 below). However this number of positions of head teachers is fewer than the number of schools and so there are still many people heading schools on administrative arrangement. All the other positions are purely administrative. The hope is that the discussion being initiated by this paper will result in the improvement of the situation and ultimately see an improvement in delivery of services by the schools.

3.0 PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXISTING CAREER PATH FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

3.1 Existing Primary Teacher Grades

Teachers in public schools in Malawi are civil servants and their grades are part and parcel of the civil service salary grade structure. Currently the categories for the salaries of teachers are as follows:

P8	Primary school Head teacher
TI	Chief primary school teacher (PT1)
TJ	Principal primary school teacher (PT2)
TK	Senior primary school teacher (PT3)
TL	Primary school teacher (PT4)
TM	Teacher trainees (ODL students)

In Malawi one can become a qualified primary school teacher by joining either the 1+1 or the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) – Initial Primary Teacher Education (PTE) programs. Students in 1+1- IPTe program start teaching in their second year of training. The entire second year is taken as a teaching practice year and students are not paid a salary but are paid an allowance. In the ODL program students are employed and are paid a salary equivalent to grade M in the civil service. On completion of their training graduates from both programs are employed at grade L or PT4. For the ODL students movement from grade TM to TL is a promotion which they get after improving their qualifications.

Ideally, the PT4, PT3, PT2, and PT1 grades were established to reward outstanding performance in the classroom. A teacher could be promoted from one grade to another while he or she continued teaching in the classroom without being given managerial responsibilities. In practice, this might be true only for the movement from PT4 (TL) to PT3 (TK), since the majority of PT2 (TJ) and PT1 (TI) teachers are either head teachers or heads of sections. Selection for promotion to the various grades is based entirely on interview results with no attempt to assess the teachers' classroom performance. Consequently, although the intention in creating PT3, PT2 and PT1 grades was to reward merit in classroom performance in practice, this is not happening.

3.2 NSTED Observations on Existing Career Path

The NSTED identifies the following as the main problems associated with the career structure for teachers in Malawi:

- Limited opportunities for promotion resulting in teachers working many years before being promoted
- Lack of continuing professional development programs,
- Unclear criteria for promotions which seem not to recognise performance and professional qualifications obtained after initial training,
- A system of promotional grades that focus on managerial rather than classroom positions.

The NSTED also observes that these problems have contributed to low teacher morale and motivation. The result has been that the teaching profession in Malawi is not attractive and teacher attrition is very high.

3.3 Observations from Studies

The NSTED observations have been corroborated by a number of studies. For example in her study on teacher motivation and incentives, Kadzamira observed that the *"career path is too*

narrow and restrictive with very few opportunities for advancement” (Kadzamira, 2006, p22). She also reported that one of the factors that contributed to low levels of teacher morale and job satisfaction was lack of continuing professional development programs. In a recent study, Steiner –Khamisi and Kunje (2011) observed that apart from not being performance-based the current grades are for both teachers and education managers. This results in teachers leaving the classroom to take up managerial positions. This point is also highlighted in the NSTED. In addition Steiner-Khamisi and Kunje also observed that the career structure is very compressed with the majority of the teachers being in the lower grades. This is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Vacancy Analysis for Primary school teachers

	Grade	Establishment	% of Total Establishment	Filled Positions	% Filled Positions	Vacancies
Primary Head teacher	TH/P8	1,003	1.8	104	10.4	899
Chief Primary School Teacher	TI/PT1	2,944	5.3	981	33.3	1,963
Principal Primary School Teacher	TJ/PT2	8,598	15.4	4,275	49.7	4,323
Senior Primary School Teacher	TK/PT3	12,792	23.0	9,682	75.7	3,110
Primary School Teacher	TL/PT4	30,350	54.5	28,798	94.9	1,552
Total		55,687	100.0	43,840	78.7	11847

Source: Adapted from figures from the Directorate of Human Resource Management as quoted by Steiner-Khamisi, G. and Kunje, D., 2011, p40, Table 10.

As of January 2010, of the 55,687 established primary school teacher positions, only 1.8% were for P8, 5.3% were for PT1, 15.4% were for PT2 and 23.0% were for PT3. None of the positions was completely filled and the higher the grade the smaller the percentage of the filled positions. Table 1 also shows that of the 43,840 teachers filling the established positions 38,480 (87.8%) were in the two lowest grades of which 28,798 (65.7%) were in the lowest grade of PT4.

Similar observations were made by Mulkeen, (2010) in an analysis of teacher salary progressions in Gambia, Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia. He noted that in general salary progression in these countries result in very modest increases even after many years of service. For example, as shown in Table 2 below, in Gambia if teachers got promoted automatically to the next grade after reaching the ceiling or bar of their salary categories it would take 15 years for their salaries to rise by 36%. In Lesotho the salaries would increase by 22%. In Malawi the increase would be by 13% while in Zambia it would be by 11% only.

Table2. Salary of a Qualified Primary Teacher as a Percentage of Starting Salary, Assuming Only Automatic Promotions

	Year 5	Year 10	Year 15
Gambia	113	123	136
Lesotho	114	122	122
Malawi	108	113	113
Zambia	106	111	111

Source: Mulkeen A. (2010).

In practice however, in Malawi the salaries hardly increase since there is no automatic breaking of the ceilings or bars. It is not uncommon for a teacher to be on the same salary grade for over 15 years. However, Mulkeen also observes that the problems are not unique to Malawi. He states that:

“Teaching is a profession that tends to have relatively flat career structure, with very few opportunities for promotion in the classroom. Internationally, many countries are struggling to develop career structures that will provide a flexible workforce, retain talent in the profession and encourage teachers with a rewarding and attractive career path.” (Mulkeen, A., 2010, p139)

The challenge, therefore, is to develop a teacher career path or structure that has adequate opportunities for promotion, transparent promotion criteria that recognises performance and continuing professional development (CPD) and aims at retaining talented teachers in the classroom.

4.0 NSTED STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE CAREER STRUCTURE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

The NSTED identifies a number of strategies for improving the career structure for primary school teachers in Malawi. For the purpose of this paper the following are most relevant.

- Increasing opportunities for promotion by creating adequate promotional grades for both classroom and managerial or administration positions
- Establishing promotion procedures that emphasise teacher performance as opposed to interview results
- Linking career progression to continuing professional development

This section discusses each of these strategies and suggests the activities that need to be done in order to achieve the intended objective of improving the career structure for primary school teachers.

4.1 Increasing Opportunities for Promotion

There is indeed need for increasing opportunities for promotion for all teachers in general and for primary school teachers in particular. Table 1 above shows that in January 2010 there were almost 29,000 teachers at PT4. This is the entry grade for qualified primary school teachers. The total output capacity for Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) in the country has until recently been less than 3,000. This therefore means that among the PT4 teachers in 2010 there were some who had been at that grade for not less than 10 years. Indeed if one takes attrition figures into account, some of the teachers could have been at that position for more than 10 years. The problem is also exacerbated by the fact that due to bureaucratic delays, even the few positions are sometimes not completely filled. Again as shown in Table 1, in January 2010 none of the

established posts at each of the grade levels was completely filled. Steiner-Khamsi and Kunje noted that sometimes the posts are not filled because funds are not allocated in the budget for this to happen.

According to Mulkeen (Ibid), opportunities for promotions or career structures obtaining in Anglophone Africa can be classified into three categories: (a) Merit-based, meant to reward performance in the classroom, (b) Qualifications-based, meant to recognise the acquisition of higher qualifications, and (c) Managerial position-based, meant for movement from the classroom to managerial positions such as head teacher, deputy head teacher, inspector and others.

The NSTED identifies elements of the first and third categories in the teaching service in Malawi. It states that there are two definitive career paths for teachers in Malawi: “(i) *A career path that targets the classroom teacher* (ii) *A career path that targets school administrators*” (MoEST, 2008a, p52). According to the NSTED the first path seems to be mostly for primary school teachers while most secondary school teachers follow the second route. However, as it has already been explained, promotional grades for primary school teachers i.e., PT3, PT2, PT1, were indeed meant to be merit-based and keep the teachers in the classrooms but in practice PT2 and PT1 are managerial positions since most of the teachers in those grades are either heads of sections or head teachers.

To improve the situation it will be necessary to review the primary school grade structure. There is a need to create separate grades for primary school managers. The primary school structure shown in Diagram 2 above should be formalised and the positions of heads of the various sections should be officially established. However it is worth mentioning that currently primary schools in Malawi have no official establishment both in terms of number of teachers and number of pupils. The general guiding principle is the 60: 1 pupil/teacher ratio, but schools can enroll as many pupils as are available. The school is never full. This also means that the school can have as many teachers as are available as long as they meet the 60:1 pupil/teacher ratio guiding principle. Schools with over 6,000 learners and over 100 teachers are not uncommon especially in urban areas. On the other hand there are also schools with only a few hundred learners and less than ten teachers. Therefore before the creation of separate grades for primary school managers it will be necessary to create primary school establishments that will take into account the various sizes of the schools.

The following activities are therefore being proposed for the improvement of promotion opportunities for primary school teachers:

- Create a structure for primary schools that takes into account their sizes,
- Review the existing primary school grade structure to include separate positions for school managers.
- Ensure regular filling of vacant positions.

4.2 Establishing performance- based procedures for promotion.

It is important that teachers are able to see that their efforts are being rewarded. This increases their motivation and encourages them to work even harder. However it is difficult to find the best way to measure performance. The general public usually associates the performance of the teacher with the achievement of his or her pupils in national examinations. While the performance of a teacher is indeed a contributing factor to the pupils' achievement it is not the only factor. Factors to do with the nature of the pupils and the teaching and learning environment also play a big role towards the achievement of the pupils. Mulkeen (Ibid) suggests the use of records of teacher attendance and annual reports from head teachers but he also cautions that extreme care needs to be taken since *"Promotions linked to head teacher reports may leave the head teachers in a position to act as gate keepers, making decisions based on personal relations, or even exacting a fee for a favourable report"*. (Mulkeen, A., 2010, p148).

It is understood that the MoEST is introducing a staff performance appraisal system. This is obviously a positive development. However it is not clear how the appraisal of the primary school teachers will be done and what elements of performance will be assessed. It is important to take heed of Mulkeen's warning.

There is need to establish a task force composed of Human Resource Management experts and educationists to create the criteria and design the system for assessing the teachers' performance. The activities here should include the following:

- Establishing of a taskforce to design the system,
- Identifying the performance elements that will be assessed,
- Training of assessors.

4.3 Linking career progression to continuing professional development

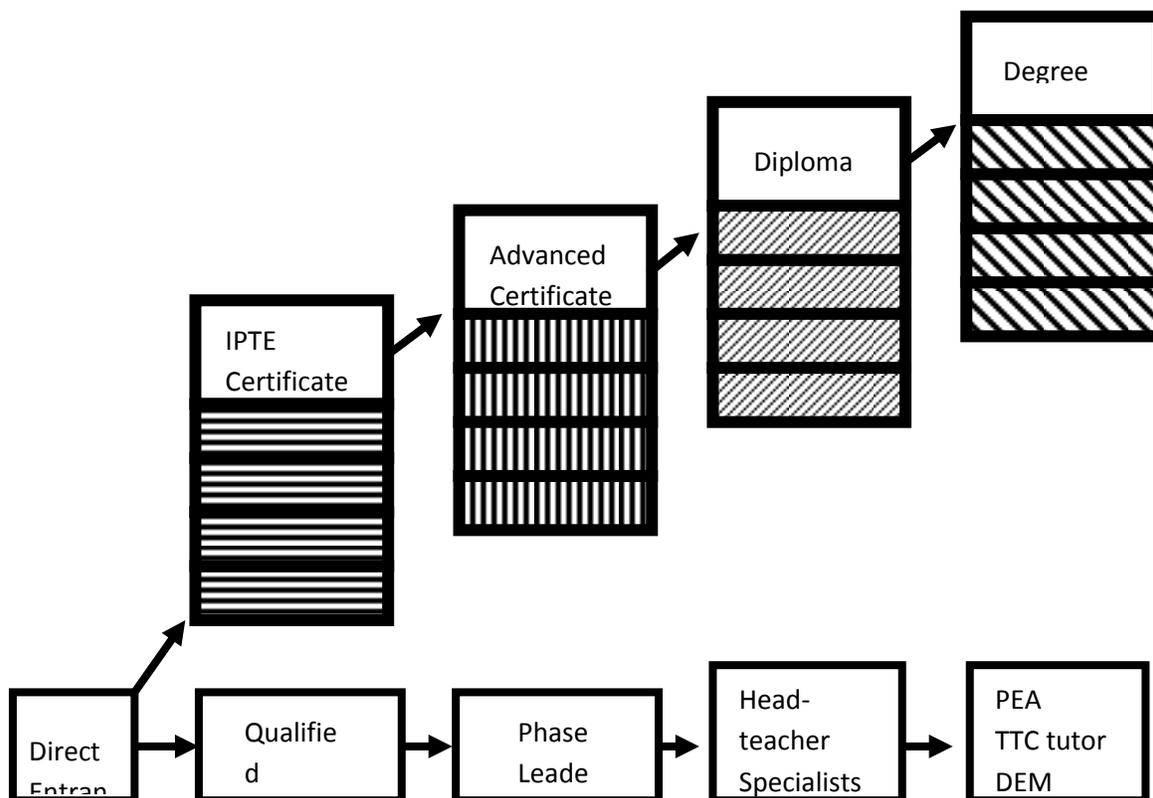
Continuing professional development (CPD) programs have been defined differently by different people in different contexts. Perhaps the definition below is most relevant to the context of this paper:

"Activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher" (OECD, 2009)

In the context of primary school teachers these activities could happen at the school, cluster, TDC or college. They could be meetings (both formal and informal meetings), seminars, workshops or up-grading courses. The NSTED recommends that a system aimed at rewarding teachers for participation in such activities should be established. In particular, it proposes the establishment of a system or structure that is linked to *"a permanent core programme of accredited (award –bearing) professional development programmes which moves from pre-service training through to training for different posts of responsibility in the education service"*.

(MoEST, 2008, p21) This structure is illustrated in the diagram below:

Diagram 3: An example of a proposed structure for the core professional development activities for Primary School Teachers



Source: MoEST, NSTED, (2008a), p22

What is being proposed here is a series of upgrading courses linked to specific managerial positions in the primary education system. The direct entrant is the one who has enrolled for the initial teacher training either through the 1+1 or the ODL-IPTE program. After qualifying as a teacher the acquisition of an advanced certificate would move him or her to the level of a phase leader or section head. Another course would see the teacher obtaining a Diploma and becoming a Head teacher or PEA. A degree would allow the teacher to become a TTC tutor of District Education Manager (DEM). The divisions in the box for each qualification indicate the fact that the courses would be made up of a number of modules which could be assessed separately and accrued over time to make up the certificate, diploma or degree. This means the teacher would not need to be on block release or study leave to do the course

Certain issues would need to be resolved before implementing this proposal. For example it is not clear whether the acquisition of the various qualifications after the initial training should lead to automatic promotions to the indicated positions or that the qualifications should just make the teachers eligible for the positions, which they can then compete for when vacancies

occur. Automatic promotions after the completion of each course would be problematic. Promotions have budgetary implications and it is always necessary to be able to control their number. A system that gets teachers automatically promoted once they complete an in-service training course can become difficult to control as teachers would want to obtain the qualification just for the promotion.

In addition it will be necessary to engage the relevant institutions such as MIE and DCE to ensure the availability of the required courses at those institutions. The important thing from this proposal is that it attempts to establish an arrangement that would ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise for the various positions before they are appointed. Currently such an arrangement does not exist. Often teachers are appointed to these positions without any relevant training at all.

It will also be necessary to establish a mechanism for record keeping and accreditation of the less formal CPD activities particularly those that happen at school, cluster or TDC levels. For example the NSTED recommends that every teacher should have at least 3 days of CPD activities per year. There is need to determine what will constitute a day of CPD and to what extent will the three days of CPD contribute to the teachers' progression through the career path.

Therefore linking of career progression of primary school teachers to continuing professional development will involve:

- Establishing a system of accreditation of CPD activities
- Creating standards for CPD activities that can be accredited
- Consultations with relevant institutions that can come up with upgrading courses for various managerial positions

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of recommendations

There is a general consensus about the need for the improvement of the career structure for teachers in Malawi. In particular, there is need to improve the career structure for primary school teachers in order to improve its ability to attract and retain them. To achieve this objective the paper has recommended the following activities:

- Create a structure for primary schools that takes into account their sizes,
- Review the existing primary school grade structure to include separate positions for school managers.
- Ensure regular filling of vacant positions.
- Establishing of a taskforce to design the system,
- Identifying the performance elements that will be assessed,
- Training of assessors,
- Establishing a system of accreditation of CPD activities,

- Creating standards for CPD activities that can be accredited,
- Consultations with relevant institutions that can come up with upgrading courses for various managerial positions,

5.2 Way forward

As already indicated issues of career path or structure for teachers are complex since they affect several departments in the MoEST and other ministries such as Treasury and the Department of Public Service Management (DPSM). It is important to involve all the relevant departments and ministries in the discussions on improving the career path for primary school teachers. It is therefore being recommended that a task force composed of officers from those relevant departments and ministries should be established. Specifically the composition of the task force should include the following:

- i. MoEST Controller of Human Resource
- ii. One officer from DPSM
- iii. One officer from Treasury
- iv. Secretary to the Teaching Service Commission
- v. Director of Basic Education
- vi. Coordinator of Teacher Education and Development
- vii. Director of Inspection and Advisory Services
- viii. Executive Secretary of the Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM)

The following are the proposed terms of reference for the task force:

- i. Examine the recommended activities and agree on which ones can be implemented
- ii. Propose the time frame for the implementation of the agreed activities
- iii. Initiate the implementation on the agreed activities

It might be necessary for the relevant MoEST departments to agree on the suggested activities before involvement of DPSM, Treasury and TUM. In conclusion therefore it is further being recommended that there should be a meeting of the departments to discuss proposals made in this paper before the establishment of the bigger task force.

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Appendix

Telegrams: MINED LILONGWE
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All correspondences should be addressed
to The Secretary for Education, Science and
Technology



in reply please quote No.
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
PRIVATE BAG 328
CAPITAL CITY
LILONGWE 3
MALAWI

Ref No. DTED/ADMIN/10/69

21st December, 2010

The Chief of Party
MTPDS, RTI International
Box B481, Lilongwe
USAID - Malawi

Dear Sir,

Subject: **MALAWI TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
(MTPDS) SUPPORT TO NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR TEACHER
EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (NSTED) IMPLEMENTATION**

I refer to your letter on the above subject matter.

The Ministry writes to endorse the implementation of these strategies as
identified in the NSTED policy options and strategies as follows:

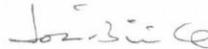
- i. Improve coordination among department involved in teacher education and development
- ii. establish a career path that links advancement to Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- iii. establish a CPD programme aimed at equipping PEA and senior school staff with supervisory and monitoring skills
- iv. Introduce modular CPD programme that has accreditation for higher academic qualifications.

I am sure that you are aware that CPD is supposed to be an integral part of Teacher Professionalism covering all the classes and learning areas in the primary sub-sector.

It is assumed that your implementation of the programme is strictly in line with the Ministry's policy agenda.

Therefore, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is very grateful for the support that USAID through MTPDS is rendering to the nation.

Yours faithfully,


J. J. Bisika