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WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE IN EARLY GRADE READING? QUALITATIVE FACTORS INFLUENCING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN MALAWI

STUDY REPORT

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ABE/LINK
Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support
(MTPDS)

What Makes the Difference in Early Grade Reading?
Qualitative Factors Influencing School Performance in
Malawi
Study Report

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Abbreviations

CPEA	Coordinating Primary Education Advisor
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEM	District Education Manager
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoM	Government of Malawi
MCSE	Malawi Certificate of Secondary Education
MG	Mother Group
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
MTPDS	Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support
PCAR	Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reforms
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SMC	School Management Committee
TALULAR	Teaching and Learning Using Locally-Available Resources
TLM	Teaching and Learning Material

Executive Summary

MTPDS Overview

The Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) program is a three-year United States Agency for International Development (USAID) activity designed to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in implementing teacher education support and systems management as well as supporting the ongoing Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR). MTPDS is providing continuous professional development (CPD)—pedagogic training with a focus on literacy—to Standard 1-4 teachers nationwide, as well as piloting intensive training on teaching reading for teachers in seven intervention districts.

Purpose

This study was undertaken to explore both the implementation in actual practice of MTPDS interventions in a sample of high and low performing schools and the non-MTPDS contextual factors in these schools that might explain the differences in teacher and learner performances. The underlying question of the case study was, “Why do some schools perform better than others that received the same MTPDS training and support?”

Methodology

The study included qualitative data gathering and analysis. Methods included a review of project documents, school visits, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Ideas, impressions, and experiences were elicited from a total of 288 people. The sample consisted of eight schools: four primary schools in each of two districts, Ntchisi and Salima. In each district, two schools were high performing and two were low performing based on pupils’ EGRA-Lite¹ scores. All schools were rural and from the same region.

Key Findings

Finding 1

Teachers overall demonstrated strengths in implementing teaching and learning skills in the performance areas of (a) Time on Task for Reading and (b) Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills. Teachers were found to be spending time specifically teaching key reading skills; they displayed knowledge of the five key reading skills and the reading lesson cycle and were using these key reading skills in their reading lessons.

1 EGRA-Lite is a shortened reading assessment instrument modified from the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) instrument, which is an internationally recognized tool to measure the reading levels of primary school learners nationwide. EGRA-Lite assesses only four of the nine EGRA reading skills, namely: 1) letter naming, 2) syllable reading, 3) familiar word reading, and 4) reading comprehension.

Finding 2

Teachers overall still need improvement in some teaching and learning skills in the performance areas of (a) Learning Environment for Reading (use of groups and pairs, and pupil-to-pupil interaction); (b) Teaching and Learning Materials (lack of sufficient learning materials); and (c) Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results (feedback to learners, and lessons taught to the whole class). Learners' books and supplementary reading materials are in critically short supply to be used effectively.

Finding 3

Teachers in high performing schools were rated higher than teachers in low performing schools in the following teaching and learning components. Percentages are for ratings of Making Progress / Showing Results combined.

- Use of Class Time (100% / 30%)
- Learner Engagement (91% / 40%)
- Encouragement of Learners (100% / 60%)
- Knowledge of Reading Program Skills (100% / 60%)
- Teaching the Five Key Reading Skills (91% / 50%)
- Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Teacher (64% / 30%)
- Monitoring Learners' Understanding During Lesson (82% / 60%)

Finding 4

Teachers in high performing schools differed from teachers in low performing schools in the following classroom dynamics.

- They made more efficient use of time in conducting classes.
- They engaged learners' attention more in class activities.
- They were warmer and friendlier and more encouraging toward pupils.
- They monitored learners' understanding more by calling on pupils, calling them to the board, calling on them to read orally, and asking them to signal responses.
- They gave more feedback about pupils' responses.

Finding 5

Overall, teachers in both high and low performing schools assessed themselves to have made improvements in most of the teaching performance areas. Around half (48%) of the teachers judged themselves to have made Significant Improvement in three of the five areas since they started implementing the Maziko a Kuwerenga program, including (a) Learning Environment for Reading; (b) Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills; and (c) Teaching and Learning Materials.

Finding 6

Emerging factors that distinguish high performing schools from low performing include (a) teacher professional development, with school ownership of the process; (b) collaboration and partnerships, including among teachers, between the head teacher and teachers, and with the community; (c) learning environments in which improvisation was evident; and (d) strong instructional leadership and monitoring. In low performing schools, these same factors were limited or qualitatively different.

Finding 7

Teachers in high performing schools were found to collaborate and support each other more in implementing the reading program than their counterparts in low performing schools, and reported that they were frequently visited and supported by their head teachers and other teachers, who functioned as instructional leaders and peer coaches.

Finding 8

In high performing schools, teachers, head teachers and communities were found to take initiative in solving common problems.

Finding 9

Teachers in low performing schools revealed limited professional collaboration. Some parents in low performing schools felt themselves to be powerless in the education of their children. They said responsibility for educating children rests with government; once they send their children to school, they hand over responsibility to the teachers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Conclusions and recommendations reflect the study findings and comments and suggestions from all stakeholders. They are provided to inform Government of Malawi (GoM) and development partner decision making regarding future programmatic efforts and policy.

Conclusions

Conclusions are presented according to the research questions for the study:

1. To what degree, or level of intensity, did the particular schools and/or classrooms implement MTPDS-supported interventions in actual practice?

Good progress has been made in implementing MTPDS training in teaching reading; strong areas in actual practice include increased time for teaching reading, teachers' knowledge of teaching reading, and use of the lesson cycle, which includes the five key skills of reading. Head teachers and teachers say teachers have made significant improvement in their knowledge and practice, especially in teaching reading and creating environments that are conducive to learning.

More readers and supplemental reading materials are needed. Areas in need of further improvement include ways to increase learner participation and interaction in reading classes, the use of teaching and learning materials by learners, and support/remediation for struggling readers. A manageable assessment system that provides information on individual pupil's progress on a regular basis is needed, and teachers need help in using remediation activities for pupils who are in danger of falling behind.

All teachers and head teachers, in both high and low performing schools, perceived the quality of the MTPDS training and coaching by MTPDS staff and Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) to be excellent. In high performing schools, the combination of training and frequent monitoring and coaching contributed significantly to the implementation in actual practice of the skills taught.

2. What were the dynamics within particular schools and/or classrooms that led to better or worse performance?

In high performing schools, teachers managed class time efficiently, used more teaching materials, and engaged learners more. Classes were active places where learners stayed on task because "things were happening."

Teachers in high performing schools collaborated among themselves and with the head teacher. Standard 1 teachers, the primary focus of MTPDS training and materials, shared what they learned with Standard 2-4 teachers; teachers helped each other with phonics, which was new to them; and teachers demonstrated new methods for teaching reading at literacy fairs and open days.

In low performing schools, much class time was wasted on classroom management tasks; teachers used few teaching materials and relied mainly on the chalkboard; and learner interaction and engagement were weak. Learners were passive.

Teachers in low performing schools collaborated less with each other and the head teacher; there was less sharing and, thus, less spread of information and skills to other teachers. Teachers in these schools were not comfortable with other teachers observing them.

3. What other factors, on top of MTPDS support, had a noticeable impact on teaching and learning performance at schools?

In high performing schools and their communities, impact factors included evidence of teacher professional development and follow up coaching, leading to effective implementation of training in actual practice; collaboration and partnerships within and among teachers, teachers and head teachers, and schools and communities; pleasant learning environments; and instructional leadership—not only on the part of head teachers, but also demonstrated by teachers who teach their colleagues and demonstrate reading lessons at literacy fairs and school open days.

In low performing schools the factors that characterized high performing schools (above) were limited or absent. Even when schools and communities had the resources to make basic improvements on their own, they lacked the initiative to do so.

Other factors that create challenges for the schools visited include large classes, teaching under a tree, poor security of property in open schools, high pupil absenteeism, teachers' limited use of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) and assessment of learners' understanding of literacy skills.

4. How can this information about contextual factors inform future interventions on additional areas to provide support?

The determining contextual factor is the initiative and "can do" spirit of the teachers, head teachers, and school communities. Future interventions must help teachers, head teachers, and school communities better understand these challenges and engage them in collaborative planning and problem solving.

A stronger effort is needed to integrate and strengthen what the school management committees (SMCs) are already doing. There is a need to better institutionalize the role of the SMCs with current decentralization efforts to engage communities to monitor quality of learning and to become more informed about school matters.

Recommendations

Training must be strengthened in three areas of need. In classroom observations of reading classes, it was observed that teachers in both high and low performing schools needed improvement in three areas related to making the role of learners more active in the classroom:

- The use of small groups or pairs who read, interact and work on tasks together;
- The use of TLMs by learners; and
- Regular assessment of individual pupil progress on the five key reading skills and targeted instruction to meet the needs of struggling readers and non-readers.

Teaching and learning materials need further development. Learner's books and teachers' lesson plans need to be developed for Standards 2-4 and a basic package of low-cost materials for learners need to be developed for teachers. Training (or reinforcement of training) in teaching and learning using locally-available resources (TALULAR) needs to be provided for teachers in both high and low performing schools.

Teachers in low performing schools should be able to visit "matched" schools (schools with common characteristics and challenges, but in which pupils are performing at higher levels) and observe Standard 1 teachers demonstrating reading lessons using the readers and the five key reading skills. Head teachers might accompany their teachers and have them shadow the head teacher as he/she observes a class, meets with a community group, etc., and shares perspectives.

Teachers in high performing schools who demonstrate skills must be recognized for their efforts and given opportunities to provide professional development to other teachers through demonstration lessons and sharing suggestions for other, new schools that are getting started in the program.

School-community partnerships need further development. School-community collaboration was found to be an important factor in high performing schools in this study. Training in developing community partnerships with schools, encouraging participatory leadership, and creating positive learning environments must be provided to head teachers and SMCs. Partnerships might be funded as joint small grant projects where both the school and the community make commitments for shared planning, problem solving, monitoring, and celebrating successes.

PEAs need continued support and involvement in future interventions. PEAs are an invaluable resource to teachers in Malawi. They are well-trained, respected, and admired by teachers, and they provide monitoring and coaching, which is an important factor in sustaining efforts in the system. PEAs need continued training, in advance of head teachers and teachers, in the leader's role in how to facilitate change at the school level and in the content of the teacher training; they also need opportunities to share promising practices and examples among themselves.

A number of factors influencing high and low performance emerged from this exploratory case study and lead to further questions. Working with the MoEST, it will be important to determine priorities for further investigation of how these factors affect future efforts to improve the schools in Malawi.

Introduction

MTPDS Overview

The Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support program (MTPDS) is a three-year United States Agency for International Development (USAID) activity designed to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in implementing teacher education support and systems management as well as supporting the ongoing Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR). MTPDS is supporting MoEST in strengthening teacher support, policy, and management systems, as well as in the provision of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Targeting Standard 1-4 teacher trainers, teachers, school administrators, and children nationwide, MTPDS links with and complements key MoEST and Government of Malawi (GoM) priority initiatives and plans in teacher education and professional development. The program activities can be grouped under the following five result areas:

- **Result 1:** Strengthened Teacher Policy, Support, and Management Systems
- **Result 2:** Enhanced Teacher Performance
- **Result 3:** Improved Early Grade Literacy
- **Result 4:** Enhanced Quality of Primary Teaching and Learning Materials; and
- **Result 5:** Improved Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems, focusing on teacher competencies and learner outcomes

To enhance teacher performance and improve early grade literacy, MTPDS is providing CPD—pedagogic training with a focus on literacy—to Standard 1-4 teachers nationwide, as well as piloting intensive training and support on teaching reading for teachers in seven intervention districts. MTPDS first began working in two districts, Ntchisi and Salima, at the beginning of the 2011-12 school year; teachers in these districts have now received nearly two full years of training and intervention support. The following year, five additional districts were added to the intensive reading pilot; these teachers have received one year of training. Coaching by MTPDS staff and Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) has been provided to all schools in the pilot intervention districts at varying levels of intensity and frequency.

MTPDS has put together an M&E plan to document project outputs and outcomes. Data are collected on a routine basis on all program activities to document project outputs and provide a sense of the scope of the program (e.g., the number of teachers, administrators, and community members trained; the number of books and manuals printed; etc.). To assess the effects of the reading interventions implemented by MTPDS on teachers and learners in the districts where the intensive reading intervention is being implemented, classroom observations and learner assessments (EGRA and EGRA-Lite) are conducted on a periodic basis.

The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) is a tool used to measure individual pupil performance in fundamental pre-reading and reading skills. It examines performance in key reading skills, such as naming letters, reading syllables and words, oral reading fluency, and

reading comprehension. EGRA-Lite is a shortened version used by teachers or project staff to measure progress on a more frequent basis. The EGRA-Lite assesses learners on four key pre-reading and reading skills, namely, letter naming, syllable reading, familiar word reading, and reading comprehension.

Results from this ongoing M&E raised questions about why some schools that received the same amount and kind of teacher training, materials support, and follow-up coaching had higher or lower learner performance on EGRA-Lite reading tasks.

Purpose

This study was undertaken to explore both the implementation in actual practice of MTPDS training and support in a small sample of high and low performing schools and the non-MTPDS contextual factors in these schools that might explain the differences in teacher and learner performances. The underlying question of the case study is, “Why do some schools perform better than others that received the same MTPDS training and support?” The assessment augments the data already collected by MTPDS through classroom observations and learner assessments by providing information on the contextual factors that enable some schools to have better learner outcomes than others with the same MTPDS interventions. It provides comparative information on how the “context” may be different between schools and how that “context” leads to variation in performance by schools receiving the same inputs from MTPDS. Results will be used to inform future interventions on additional areas to provide support or where to enhance or intensify current support.

The case study answered the following research questions:

1. To what degree, or level of intensity, did the particular schools and/or classrooms implement MTPDS-supported interventions in actual practice?
2. What were the dynamics within particular schools and/or classrooms that led to better or worse performance?
3. What other factors, on top of MTPDS support, had a noticeable impact on teaching and learning performance at schools?
4. How can this information about contextual factors inform future interventions on additional areas to provide support?

A list of research questions, sub-questions, and data sources is included in **Annex 1**.

The study methodology is presented in Section 2.0, followed by the results of the classroom observations, which provided evidence of actual implementation of MTPDS and dynamics of the classrooms, in Section 3.0. In Section 4.0, results from interviews of observed teachers and their head teachers relating to the degree of teacher improvement following MTPDS training and coaching are presented and discussed. Emerging factors from what contributes to high and low performing schools are discussed in Section 5.0; suggestions from stakeholders’ interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) are presented in Section 6.0; and finally, conclusions and recommendations are provided in Section 7.0.

Methodology

Introduction

The MTPDS study included mostly qualitative data gathering and analysis. The study focused strongly on classroom observations and interviews and focus groups with school-level personnel and stakeholders, including communities and pupils, to get their opinions about MTPDS training and support along with other contextual factors. These ideas, impressions, and experiences were elicited from a total of 288 people. Methods included review of project and related documents, school visits, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and FGDs.

Sample and Sample Selection

Schools

The sample consisted of eight schools in Malawi: four primary schools in each of two districts, Ntchisi and Salima. In each district, two schools were high performing schools and two were low performing schools based on pupils' scores in four areas of EGRA-Lite assessments—letter naming, syllable reading, reading fluency, and reading comprehension—in Standards 1-4 conducted in March 2013. All schools were rural; teachers at all schools received the same MTPDS training, materials support, and follow-up coaching. Ntchisi and Salima districts were the first two districts to participate in MTPDS intensive reading intervention activities, and schools in the study had participated for nearly two years. An effort was made to select schools of similar size, but after controlling for training, coaching, length of time in the project, and pupil performance, there were not enough schools with EGRA-Lite scores to be able to control for school size.

To select the sample, MTPDS rank ordered the schools in each district from highest to lowest on school composite scores from the March 2013 EGRA-Lite and then selected the highest four schools and lowest four schools. One high performing school had to be replaced because it was a testing site for national examinations during the week of data collection; it was replaced by the next-highest performing school in the rankings.

The final sample of schools selected for site visits, identified by number, high or low pupil performance on EGRA-Lite, and district, is shown in **Table 1**.

Participants

In each study school, three qualified (Malawi Certificate of Secondary Education, or MCSE), MTPDS-trained teachers in Standards 1, 2, and 4² were selected to be observed and interviewed. These standards were chosen because there were three members of the research team and classes were up to one hour each; given the short length of the school day and other

² These three standards were those selected for EGRA-Lites; Standards 2 and 4 because these are the standards assessed in the annual national EGRA samples of 2010, 2011, and 2012. Standard 1 was added into the EGRA-Lite data collection because it was the focus grade for the MTPDS intensive reading intervention program. Standard 3 was left out of the sampling in order to keep the number of learners sampled in a day manageable for one data collector to assess at each school.

data collection activities (interviews and FGDs) to be conducted, observation of three classes was feasible. In schools with more than one stream, observers randomly selected teachers from the qualified, MTPDS-trained teachers at each standard. No student teachers or other unqualified teachers were included to eliminate bias. In three schools only two qualified teachers were available on the day of the visit in the standards required; in the eight schools, 21 qualified teachers were observed and interviewed, 13 male and 8 female.

Other participants at each school included in the study were the head teacher; other qualified, MTPDS-trained non-observed teachers in Standards 1, 2, and 4; randomly selected Standard 4 pupils; community members; and PEAs, when available. The number of participants at each school is listed by category and gender in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Summary of Schools Visited and Participants by Position and Gender*

No. / Perf	District (Size 1-4)	Teachers observed / interviewed	Other teachers in FGD	Head teacher interviewed	Pupils in FGD	Community members in FGD	Government officials interviewed	Total Participants
1 H	Ntchisi (709)	3f	6f	1m	2m-2f	2 m—6 f	1PEAf	23
2 L	Ntchisi (494)	1m-1f	2m-2f	1m	2m-2f	10 m—23 f	0	44
3 L	Ntchisi (431)	3m	1m	1m	2m-2f	10m-3f	1PEAm	23
4 H	Ntchisi (468)	2m-1f	2m-1f	1m	2m-2f	19m-45f	1PEAf	76
5 L	Salima (1087)	2f	1m-6f	1m	2m-2f	5m-3f	0	22
6 H	Salima (222)	2m-1f	2m-1f	1m	2m-2f	14m-42f	0	67
7 H	Salima (340)	2m	0	1m	2m-2f	3m-3f	1PEAm	14
8 L	Salima (331)	3m	2f	1m	2m-2f	3m-5f	1PEAm	19
Total		21 (13m/8f)	26 (8m/18f)	8m	32 (16m/16f)	196 (66m/130f)	5 (3m/2f)	288 (114m, 174f)

* H= high performing, L=low performing, Size=Pupil Enrolment Std 1-4, m=male, f=female FGD=Focus Group Discussion, PEA=Primary Education Advisor

Instrumentation

Data were collected from a review of documents and using the following instruments.

Document Review

This review included MTPDS quarterly and annual reports; literacy training modules; project monitoring tools, including classroom observation instruments; EGRA-Lite assessment data; and the MTPDS final evaluation.

Classroom Observation Instrument (observed teachers teaching reading lessons).

In designing the classroom observation instrument (**Annex 3**), emphasis was placed on collecting data on the teaching of the five key reading skills taught in MTPDS, Modules 1-4 and related components support a quality reading program. The class observation guide consisted of 14 Components of Effective Teaching of Reading, which were grouped into five performance areas, as shown below:

Performance Areas and Related Components

Performance Area 1: Time On Task For Reading

- Component #1: Time for Teaching and Learning to Read
- Component #2: Use of Class Time
- Component #3: Learner Engagement

Performance Area 2: Learning Environment For Reading

- Component #4: Arrangement of Learners
- Component #5: Encouragement of Learners
- Component #6: Gender Sensitivity
- Component #7: Learner Interaction

Performance Area 3: Knowledge & Teaching Of Reading Skills

- Component #8: Knowledge of the Reading Program Skills
- Component #9: Teaching the Five Key Reading Skills

Performance Area 4: Teaching & Learning Materials

- Component #10: Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Teacher
- Component #11: Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Learners

Performance Area 5: Assessment, Feedback, & Use Of Results

- Component #12: Monitoring Learners' Understanding During Lesson
- Component #13: Feedback
- Component #14: Differentiated Instruction

Each component of teaching consisted of: 1) a statement of “best practice” that describes the component; 2) a sequence of statements that describe the development of teaching skill in that particular area, from the absence of skill to the “best practice,” with ratings ranging from “Not

Yet Started” to “Getting Started” to “Making Progress” to “Showing Results;” and 3) an Evidence section for the observer to describe specifically what was observed in each component.

Note-Taking Form for Five Key Reading Skills (observed teachers teaching reading lessons). This is a note-taking form for observers to record specific examples of what the teacher does and what the learners do in each of the five key reading skills (phonological awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension) (*Annex 3*).

Semi-Structured Interview Guides. Using semi-structured interview guides ensured that the same questions were asked of all respondents in a similar category, increasing reliability of data. Semi-structured interview guides were developed for observed teachers, head teachers, and MoEST officials (PEAs). These guides were designed to address relevant research questions (*Annex 4*).

Focus Group Discussions. FGDs provided an opportunity to probe for similarities and differences of opinion within a position category. Semi-structured FGD guides were designed to address relevant research questions with non-observed teachers in Standards 1, 2, and 4; pupils; and community members (*Annex 5*).

Data Collection Protocol

A three-person research team visited each school. First, three teachers were observed teaching a reading lesson (for the entire lesson) and then interviewed; next, head teachers were interviewed and school demographic information collected, unless community members were waiting; in which case, they were given priority. Next, FGDs were held with the following groups: 1) other qualified, MTPDS-trained non-observed teachers in Standards 1, 2, and 4; 2) a randomly selected group of Standard 4 pupils; and 3) community members (if not conducted earlier), including SMCs, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), Mother’s Groups, parents, and other community members. In some schools PEAs came to the school and were interviewed, and another PEA was interviewed at the District Education Manager’s (DEM’s) office. Focus groups with community members and pupils were conducted in Chichewa.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and qualitative methods, including looking for emerging themes in the data from various sources and calculations of percentages of teachers in various categories of performance and improvement. Data from classroom observations of teaching performance, teacher self-assessments of improvement, and head teachers’ assessments of teachers’ improvement were analyzed by high and low performing schools. Data from classroom assessments of teacher performance and teachers’ self-assessments of improvement were further broken down by gender and by the standard taught by the teacher.

Limitation

The sample size was limited because of time constraints with the closing of the project. The schools were purposefully selected so they shared similar characteristics (e.g., location, training, and follow up, etc.); however, undetected differences could bias results.

Results –Teacher Performance from Classroom Observations

Introduction

In this section, each of the sub-sections below addresses one or more of the research questions for the study. The specific questions addressed will be identified at the beginning of each sub-section. In addition, sub-sections 3.4 and 3.5 present results of additional analyses of teacher performance on classroom observations by the standard taught (1, 2, and 4) and teacher performance by gender, respectively.

Overall Teacher Performance Results by Performance Areas

This sub-section presents the overall results (for the total sample of teachers, at both high and low performing schools) on teacher implementation in actual practice of components of teaching and learning taught in the MTPDS training. It provides information related to the following research question:

1. To what degree, or level of intensity, did the particular schools and/or classrooms implement MTPDS-supported interventions in actual practice?

Results will be discussed overall by the five performance areas on the Classroom Observation Instrument. The key findings are presented first, followed by the supporting data. A breakdown of results for high and low performing schools is presented later.

Key Findings

Finding 1: Teachers overall demonstrated strengths in implementing teaching and learning skills in the performance areas of (a) Time on Task for Reading and (b) Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills. Teachers were found to be spending time specifically teaching key reading skills; they displayed knowledge of the five key reading skills and the reading lesson cycle and were using these key reading skills in their reading lessons.

Finding 2: Teachers overall still need improvement in some teaching and learning skills in the performance areas of (a) Learning Environment for Reading (use of groups and pairs, and pupil-to-pupil interaction); (b) Teaching and Learning Materials (lack of sufficient learning materials); and (c) Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results (feedback to learners, and lessons taught to the whole class). Learners' books and supplementary reading materials are in critically short supply to be used effectively.

Supporting Data

Overall results of classroom observations of reading lessons for 21 teachers across the sample schools show the actual implementation of MTPDS-targeted skills in the five performance areas:

- **Performance Area 1:** Time on Task for Reading
- **Performance Area 2:** Learning Environment for Reading
- **Performance Area 3:** Knowledge & Teaching of Reading Skills
- **Performance Area 4:** Teaching & Learning Materials

- **Performance Area 5:** Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results

Results for the 21 teachers in the study are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Overall Summary Data for Teachers by Performance Areas

	PA 1: Time on Task for Reading	PA 2: Learning Environment for Reading	PA 3: Knowledge & Teaching of Reading Skills	PA 4: Teaching & Learning Materials	PA 5: Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results
Showing Results	24%	7%	19%	10%	2%
Making Progress	48%	48%	57%	19%	43%
Getting Started	24%	13%	24%	38%	21%
Not Yet Started	5%	32%	0%	33%	35%

Teachers were rated on 14 components of teaching and learning within these performance areas using a development scale from “Not Yet Started” to “Getting Started” to “Making Progress” to “Showing Results.” These ratings represent a continuum from the absence of the skill (“Not Yet Started”) to ideal implementation (“Showing Results”). Teachers at the level of “Not Yet Started” and “Getting Started” are considered to need improvement, whereas teachers at the “Making Progress” stage are considered to be doing well. Teachers rated as “Showing Results” have demonstrated mastery of the skill. Results for the total sample of teachers are presented by the five performance areas.

Performance Area 1: Time on Task for Reading includes three components related to the amount of time spent teaching reading, the efficient use of class time, and learner engagement in the lesson. Results for the overall group of teachers show that teachers are doing relatively well in this area: 24% of teachers were rated Showing Results and 48% were rated Making Progress; however, 28% need improvement based on their ratings of Getting Started (24%) and Not Yet Started (5%). The MTPDS reading intervention requires teachers to spend one hour per day teaching reading. The 24% of teachers rated Showing Results spent the full hour teaching reading; the 48% of teachers rated Moving Along spent 30-59 minutes teaching reading; 24% of teachers taught reading for 15-29 minutes; and 5% of teachers spent less than 15 minutes teaching reading. While the time actually spent in teaching reading skills misses the one hour mark in many classrooms, teachers and head teachers report that more time is spent than was previously spent on specifically teaching the key reading skills of phonological awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

Performance Area 2: Learning Environment for Reading includes four components related to the psychosocial environment of the classroom, including grouping of pupils, encouragement to learn, gender sensitivity, and interaction among learners. Results were mixed in this area. For the overall group of teachers, classroom observation ratings in this performance area showed

that only 7% of teachers were rated Showing Results and 48% were rated as Making Progress. A large percentage of teachers were rated as Getting Started (13%) or Not Yet Started (32%), due in part to pupils being taught predominantly as a whole class with little interaction among learners. Teachers demonstrated strengths in the components of Encouragement to Learn and Gender Sensitivity. Teachers encouraged pupils and asked pupils to encourage each other, and they treated boys and girls equally, calling on boys and girls equally to answer questions, to read, and to go to the chalkboard.

Performance Area 3: Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills includes two components, which are a main focus of the MTPDS project: increasing teachers' knowledge of how to teach reading and the five components of the reading lesson cycle, which should be included in every lesson. Teachers demonstrated strength in both of these components; 19% of teachers were rated as Showing Results and 57% as Making Progress; still, 24% were rated Getting Started. No teacher was rated Not Yet Started.

Performance Area 4: Teaching and Learning Materials consists of two components related to the use of TLMs by the teacher and by learners. Results indicate a need for improvement, as 33% of teachers were rated as Not Yet Started and 38% as Getting Started in class observations, while only 10% and 19% were rated as Showing Results and Making Progress, respectively. In many classrooms teachers used only the chalkboard and learners had no materials. Few books were in sight, and those that were used were typically shared by too many learners for all to see, much less read.

Teachers gave various reasons for the lack of books: they didn't receive sufficient numbers of books, pupils took books home to read and didn't return them, and books were damaged from use. Also, some teachers said that since only Standard 1 trained teachers received books, they shared them with teachers who taught other classes and levels, so they were not always available.

Performance Area 5: Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results consists of three components related to monitoring pupils' understanding during the lesson, feedback, and use of results. Results in **Table 3** show wide variation among the components in this performance area.

Table 3: Results for Components in Performance Area 5: Assessment, Feedback, & Use of Results

Components:	Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
12 Monitoring Learners' Understanding During the Lesson	5%	24%	67%	5%
13 Feedback	10%	29%	62%	0%
14 Differentiated Instruction	90%	10%	0%	0%
Sub-total PA5	35%	21%	43%	1%

Overall, only 1% of teachers were rated as Showing Results, 43% of teachers as Making Progress, 21% as Getting Started, and 35% as Not Yet Started. In many classrooms, teachers assessed

learners' understanding of lesson content informally during the lesson by asking questions, calling pupils to the board, and asking pupils to read orally; but they provided minimal feedback and did not use the information to provide remediation for struggling learners. Classes were typically taught at one level and to the whole class; there were no activities for pupils with varying reading skills and abilities.

The overall summary data for the Components of Teaching and Learning that comprise the five performance areas are included in **Annex 5**.

Teacher Performance for High/Low Performing Schools

This sub-section presents results on teacher implementation in actual practice of the 14 components of teaching and learning taught in the MTPDS training, broken out by high and low performing schools. It provides information related to the two research questions:

1. To what degree, or level of intensity, did the particular schools and/or classrooms implement MTPDS-supported interventions in actual practice?
2. What were the dynamics within particular schools and/or classrooms that led to better or worse performance?

Key Findings

Finding 1: Teachers in high performing schools were rated higher than teachers in low performing schools in the following teaching and learning components. Percentages are for ratings of Making Progress/Showing Results combined.

Table 4: Components of Teaching and Learning where Teachers in High Performing Schools were Rated Higher than Teachers in Low Performing Schools, by Percent of Teachers Rated Making Progress/Showing Results

Component	Teachers in High Performing Schools	Teachers in Low Performing Schools
Use of Class Time	100%	30%
Learner Engagement	91%	40%
Encouragement of Learners	100%	60%
Knowledge of Reading Program Skills	100%	60%
Teaching the Five Key Reading Skills	91%	50%
Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Teacher	64%	30%
Monitoring Learners' Understanding During Lesson	82%	60%
Feedback	73%	50%

As shown in **Table 4**, teachers in high performing schools were rated higher than their counterparts in low performing schools in eight of the 14 components of teaching and learning. However, in the case of Monitoring Learners' Understanding During the Lesson and Feedback, it

is important to keep in mind that the sample size was small (11 teachers in high performing schools and 10 teachers in low performing schools).

Finding 2: Teachers in both high and low performing schools were rated high in the following teaching and learning components (high / low):

- Time for Teaching and Learning to Read (82% / 80%)
- Gender Sensitivity (91% / 80%)

Finding 3: Teachers in both high and low performing schools need improvement in the following teaching and learning components (high / low):

- Arrangement of Learners (36% / 30%)
- Learner Interaction (27% / 10%)
- Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Learners (0% / 20%)
- Differentiated Instruction (0% / 10%)

Finding 4: Teachers in high performing schools differed from teachers in low performing schools in the following classroom dynamics:

- They made more efficient use of time in conducting classes.
- They engaged learners' attention more in class activities.
- They were warmer and friendlier, and more encouraging toward pupils.
- They monitored learners' understanding more by calling on pupils, calling them to the board, calling on them to read orally, and asking them to signal responses.
- They gave more feedback about pupils' responses, in ways that encouraged further effort.

Supporting Data

Comparisons of observers' ratings of teachers in high and low performing schools were made for each of the Teaching and Learning Components in the five performance areas. All teachers in the two groups received MTPDS training and coaching by MTPDS staff and/or PEAs, and they all taught in the two original districts served by MTPDS, Ntchisi and Salima, where the intervention had been implemented for two years.

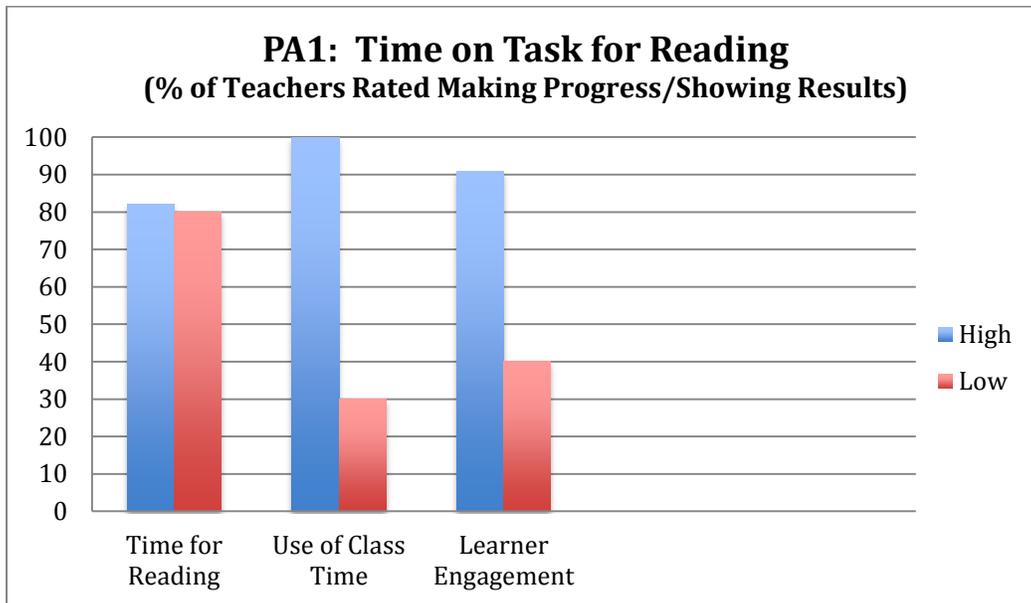
Performance Area 1: Time for Teaching and Learning

Performance Area 1 consists of three Teaching and Learning Components:

- Component 1: Time for Teaching and Learning to Read
- Component 2: Use of Class Time
- Component 3: Learner Engagement

Results for Performance Area 1: Time on Task for Reading are presented in **Figure 1** for teachers in high and low performing schools. Complete breakdowns for high and low performing schools by each rating category are included in **Annex 6**.

Figure 1: Teachers' Performance on Time on Task for Reading, for High and Low Performing Schools



A comparison of high and low performing schools in Performance Area 1: Time on Task for Reading shows that most teachers (82% in high performing schools and 80% in low performing schools) were Making Progress or Showing Results in the component of Time for Teaching &

Teachers in high performing schools conserved time for teaching and learning activities. Classes started on time, and the activities moved from one to another at a good pace. Learners did not have time to get bored. One teacher alternated phonics routines with songs, sounding out syllables, and reading words and sentences.

By contrast, classes in low performing schools often started late, and time was wasted during classes with organizational tasks. One teacher spent five minutes passing out readers one by one, making a trip to his desk each time to pick up a book and give it to a pupil. Then he started class, leaving a stack of books on his desk and many learners without books.

Learning to Read; that is, they were teaching reading for 30 minutes to one hour. There were differences, however, in the Use of Class Time; all teachers observed in high performing schools used time efficiently (time was spent on teaching and learning activities), whereas in low performing schools, only 30% of observed teachers did so. The majority of teachers in low performing schools (70%) wasted class time by starting late and/or handling classroom management issues inefficiently.

Learner engagement in reading lessons was high in high performing schools, where 91% of teachers were rated Making Progress or Showing Results; but in low performing schools, only 40% of teachers were rated in this category. Teachers in high performing schools kept pupils' attention by involving them; when children were momentarily off-task from time to time, teachers brought them back on task by calling on pupils, asking choral response questions, and

asking learners to signal an answer (thumbs up, thumbs down) to make their roles more active. In low performing schools, more pupils would remain off task for long periods; they sat quietly but did not participate in the class, even when the teacher asked for whole class responses.

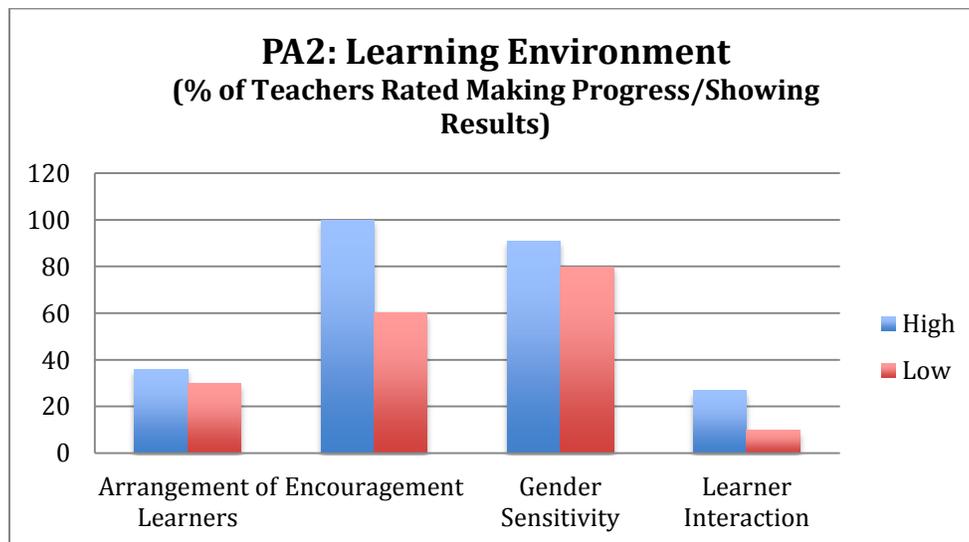
Performance Area 2: Learning Environment for Reading

Performance Area 2 consists of four Teaching and Learning Components:

- Component 4: Arrangement of Learners
- Component 5: Encouragement of Learners
- Component 6: Gender Sensitivity
- Component 7: Learner Interaction

Results of class observations of teachers in high and low performing schools for components in Performance Area 2: Learning Environment for Reading are presented in **Figure 2**. Complete breakdowns for high and low performing schools by rating categories are included in **Annex 6**.

Figure 2: Teachers' Performance on Learning Environment for Reading, for High and Low Performing Schools



A comparison of high and low performing schools in Performance Area 2: Learning Environment for Reading shows that in the component of Arrangement of Learners, teachers in both high and

low performing schools were rated low (only 36% and 30% of teachers, respectively, were rated as Making Progress or Showing Results). This component examines group size—whole class, groups, pairs, individuals—and the flexible use of group sizes to accommodate the lesson objectives and pupil needs. In both high and low performing schools, teachers relied predominantly on whole class instruction and individual tasks; most did not use groups or pairs. Often pupils sat in groups but the lesson was taught to the whole class; in some classes, pupils also completed exercises individually, but group or pair work was seldom observed.

In the component of Encouragement of Learners, 100% of teachers in high performing schools and 60% of teachers in low performing schools were rated as Making Progress or Showing Results. Teachers in high performing schools were warm, friendly, and approachable, and many interacted with learners and encouraged them. In low performing schools, 60% of teachers were warm, friendly, and approachable; only one teacher was rigid and punishing, and the pupils seemed to fear the teacher. Other teachers in low performing schools were neither rigid and punishing nor friendly, but “in between.”

In the component of Gender Sensitivity, there was only a small difference between teachers in high and low performing schools, considering the small sample size. Teachers in both groups demonstrated a concern for treating boys and girls equally (91% high, 80% low, a difference of about one teacher). The majority of teachers in both groups called on children equally to answer questions, to go to the board, and to read orally. A number of teachers rotated between girls and boys in giving these opportunities. Materials, when used, were gender-neutral.

A comparison of teachers in high and low performing schools in the component of Learner Interaction shows that the majority of teachers in both groups were rated as Not Yet Started/Getting Started (73% high, 90% low). Low performing schools were less likely than high performing schools to encourage learner interaction. In both cases, there was little or no interaction between learners. Where interaction among learners (related to the lesson objectives) was observed, learners interacted only briefly. When learners moved around as directed by the teacher, it was usually to share a book because there were so few books in the class.

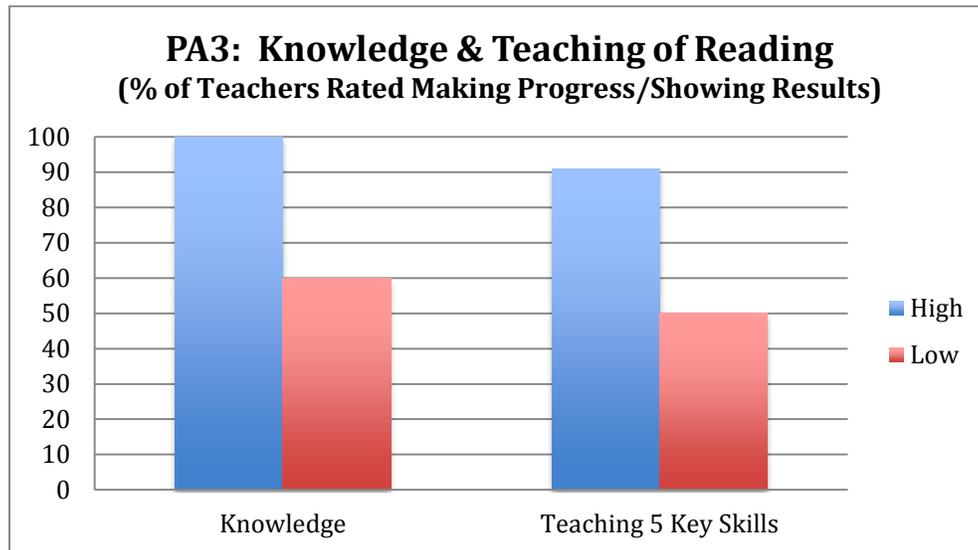
Performance Area 3: Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills

Performance Area 3 consists of two Teaching and Learning Components:

- Component 8: Knowledge of the Reading Program Skills
- Component 9: Teaching the Five Key Reading Skills

Results of class observations of teachers in high and low performing schools for components in Performance Area 3: Knowledge & Teaching of Reading Skills are presented in **Figure 3**. Complete breakdowns for high and low performing schools by rating categories are included in **Annex 6**.

Figure 3: Teachers' Performance in Knowledge & Teaching of Reading Skills, for High and Low Performing Schools



In the component of Knowledge of Reading Program Skills, a comparison of high and low performing schools shows that teachers in high performing schools demonstrated more knowledge of methods of reading instruction (e.g., sounds, blending sounds, fluent reading, etc.) and explanations were clear to learners (100% of teachers rated Making Progress/Showing Results, compared to teachers in low performing schools [60%]).

In the component of Teaching the Five Key Reading Skills, observers assessed the number of reading skills taught in the lesson from a list of the five key skills (phonological awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension [listening or reading]). MTPDS has trained teachers how to incorporate all five key skills in a lesson using the lesson cycle. A comparison of high and low performing schools shows that teachers in high performing schools taught 3-5 of the reading skills in the observed lesson (91%) compared to low performing schools, where half of the teachers (50%) taught 3-5 of the skills and the other half taught fewer in the observed lesson.

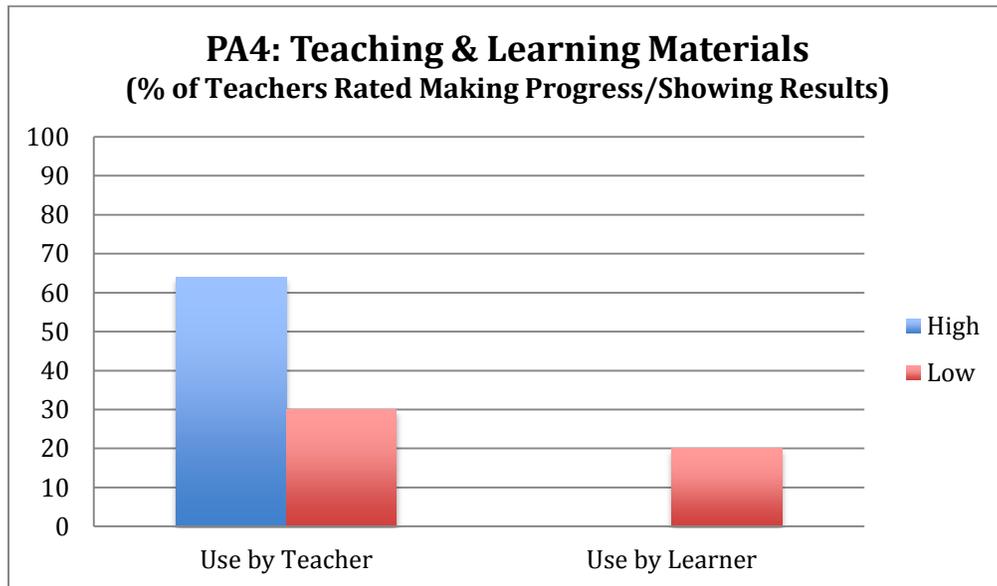
Performance Area 4: Teaching and Learning Materials

Performance Area 4 consists of two Teaching and Learning Components:

- Component 10: Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Teacher
- Component 11: Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Learners

Results of class observations of teachers in high and low performing schools for components in Performance Area 4: Teaching and Learning Materials are presented in **Figure 4**. Complete breakdowns for high and low performing schools by rating categories are included in **Annex 6**.

Figure 4: Teachers' Performance in Teaching and Learning Materials, for High and Low Performing Schools



Components in Performance Area 4: Teaching and Learning Materials relate to the *use* of materials by the teacher and the learners. A comparison of teachers in high and low performing schools in the component of Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by the Teacher reveals that 64% of teachers in high performing schools were rated as Making Progress/Showing Results compared to 30% of teachers in low performing schools. Materials used by teachers, in addition to the chalkboard, which was used universally, included teacher-made word cards, slates with words, sentence strips, charts, and learner's books (where teachers modeled oral reading fluency). Teachers in high performing schools were not provided more teaching resources; they made them from locally available materials. In low performing schools, however, teachers tended to depend on the chalkboard.

In the component of Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Learners, observers noted the materials used by learners, typically exercise books, pens, and pencils. In some classes learner's books were used, although usually only by a few learners. In several classes groups of 10-12 learners gathered in a circle to share one learner's book; half of the learners viewed the book upside down.

Pupils did not frequently use teacher-made materials; and when they did, only a few pupils used them. Due to the limited use of other materials beside exercise books and writing instruments, ratings by observers were low for both high and low performing schools (100% and 80% of teachers in high and low performing schools, respectively, were rated as Not Yet Started/Getting Started.)

As noted previously, this is an unexpected finding given that MTPDS provided learner's books to Standard 1 teachers. Teachers gave various reasons for the lack of books: some said they didn't receive sufficient numbers of books; pupils took books home to read and didn't return them;

and books were damaged from use. Also, some teachers said that since only Standard 1 trained teachers received books, they shared them with teachers who taught other classes and levels, so they were not always available to them. This is an area where improvement is needed in both high and low performing schools.

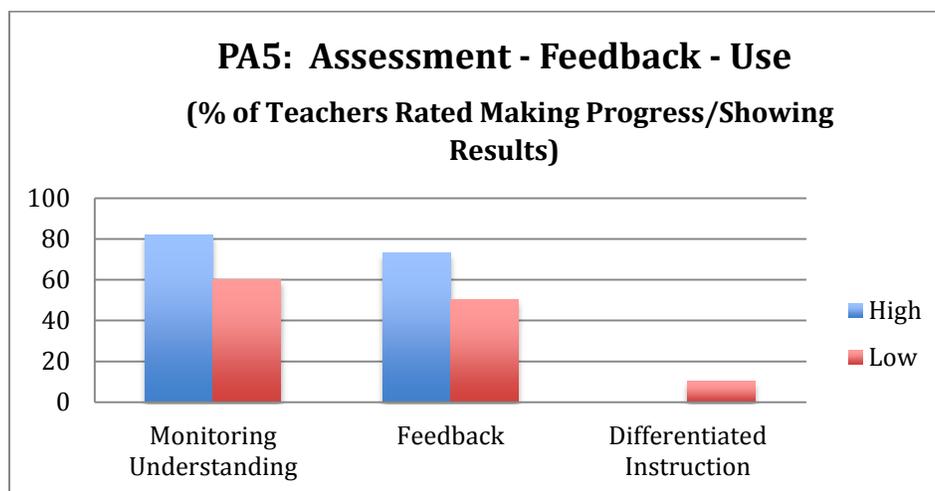
Performance Area 5: Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results

Performance Area 5 consists of three Teaching and Learning Components:

- Component 12: Monitoring Learners' Understanding During Lesson
- Component 13: Feedback
- Component 14: Differentiated Instruction

Results of class observations of teachers in high and low performing schools for components in Performance Area 5: Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results are presented in **Figure 5**. Complete breakdowns for high and low performing schools by rating categories are included in **Annex 6**.

Figure 5: Teachers' Performance in Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results, for High and Low Performing Schools



Results show that teachers in both high and low performing schools monitor learners' understanding of the content informally during lessons (82% rated as Making Progress/Showing Results in high performing schools compared to 60% in low). Teachers did this by asking questions and calling on pupils to answer, calling pupils to the board or the front of the classroom to demonstrate their knowledge, calling on pupils to read orally, asking pupils to signal their responses, checking work, and observing learners as they work. Choral responses are not an example of monitoring understanding because such responses do not provide information about individuals. To be assessed as Making Progress or Showing Results, the teacher must assess the understanding of most/all learners during the lesson.

In the component related to Feedback, observers looked for teacher feedback to individuals or groups (not only feedback to the whole class) that is given in a way that encourages further

effort. Such feedback was observed in lessons taught by teachers in high performing schools more frequently than in low performing schools (73% versus 50%, respectively).

Teacher feedback in response to learners' responses should:

- ◆ Be specific to the individual
- ◆ Be specific to the answer or task
- ◆ Be provided for correct and incorrect responses
- ◆ Encourage further effort

This kind of feedback was observed more often in high performing schools. In other classes, typically teachers gave no feedback to incorrect answers and simply called on another pupil.

The component of Differentiated Instruction is an area in need of improvement for teachers in both high and low performing schools; 100% and 90% were rated Not Yet Started or Getting Started, respectively. If teachers monitor and assess pupil

learning in reading, they will have the information to make decisions about which learners need remediation and which would benefit from enrichment. However, observers did not see this in classrooms, with one exception—one teacher in a low performing school. Lessons were typically taught to the whole class. Remediation was “covered” by re-teaching the lesson. Teachers told observers that they frequently re-taught lessons because of high pupil absenteeism, with pupils “here today, gone tomorrow,” and to help struggling learners, but the revision lessons were taught to the whole class. Some teachers said they helped struggling learners after school.

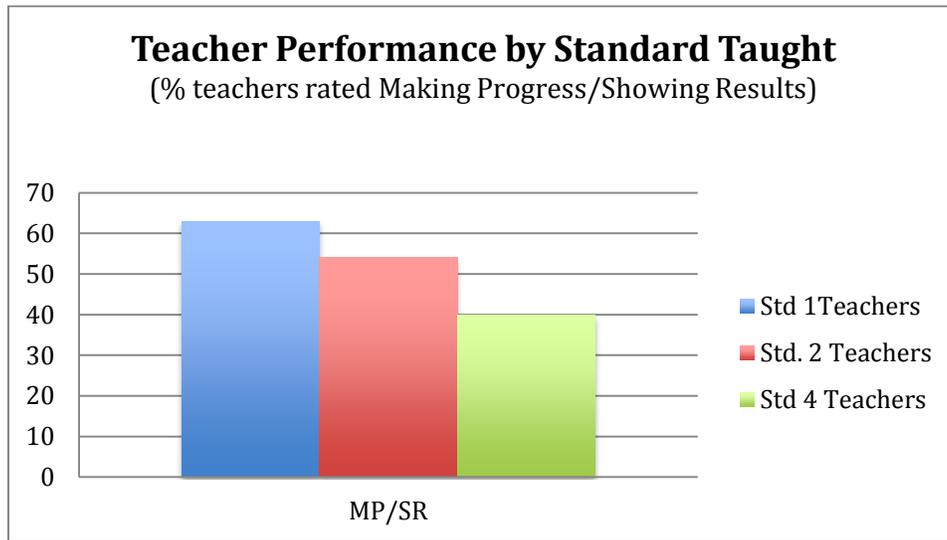
Teaching Performance by Standard 1, 2, and 4 Teachers for the Overall Classroom Observation

Finding: Observed teachers who taught Standard 1 were rated highest on the overall classroom observation, followed by Standard 2 teachers; and Standard 4 teachers were rated the lowest.

A follow up analysis was conducted to determine if there were differences by the standard taught by teachers. Since Standard 1 teachers received the most MTPDS training and coaching and were provided with Nditha Kuwerenga learner's books and scripted lesson plans, project personnel were interested in knowing if Standard 1 teachers were rated higher in classroom observations than Standard 2 and 4 teachers.

As shown in **Figure 6**, the percent of all Standard 1 teachers in the sample rated Making Progress/Showing Results on the overall classroom observation was the highest, followed by Standard 2 teachers. The percent of Standard 4 teachers rated Making Progress/Showing Results was the lowest of the standards observed.

Figure 6: Percent of Teachers by Standard Taught Who Were Rated as Making Progress/Showing Results



Teachers and head teachers reported that teachers at a school typically share materials, so there is an aspect of spread that occurs between teachers of different standards; however, Standard 1 teachers, the primary target of the MTPDS intervention to date, seem to benefit the most. Teachers who teach other standards also seem to be benefitting from the more limited training and coaching they receive, and/or from spread at the school level of strategies and resources, e.g., learner's books and scripted lesson plans.

There were three training modules under the *Maziko a Kuwerenga* intervention. Module 1 was a two-day training for all Standard 1-4 teachers and head teachers (in the 7 intervention districts) which covered the five foundational skills of reading. Modules 2 and 3 were for Standard 1 teachers and head teachers only, which covered 6 days of training. The focus of these last two modules was on the actual implementation of the *Maziko a Kuwerenga* program (i.e., how to use the scripted lesson plans, utilizing the *Nditha Kuwerenga* reader workbook, continuous assessment of early reading, etc.).

Teaching Performance by Gender for the Overall Classroom Observation

Finding: There were no differences by gender for teacher performance on the overall classroom observation results.

A follow-up analysis was done to determine if there were differences associated with teacher gender. As shown in **Table 5**, male and female teachers performed at similar levels.

Table 5: Percent of Teachers by Gender Rated as Not Yet Started/Getting Started and Making Progress/Showing Results on the Overall Classroom Observation

	Male	Female
Not Yet Started/Getting Started	48%	46%
Making Progress/Showing Results	52%	54%

Results - Degree of Improvement in Teaching Performance

Introduction

This section presents and discusses findings on teachers' self-ratings and head teachers' ratings of teachers on the degree of improvement made in the five performance areas. The purpose of this section is to triangulate the classroom performance data presented in Section 3.0. As a follow-up to the classroom observations, it addresses the same Research Questions, 1 and 2:

1. To what degree, or level of intensity, did the particular schools and/or classrooms implement MTPDS-supported interventions in actual practice?
2. What were the dynamics within particular schools and/or classrooms that led to better or worse performance?

During the classroom observations, outside observers looked at actual implementation and dynamics within classrooms on the day of the school visits. In follow-up interviews, observed teachers were asked to think back to before the MTPDS training and reflect on how much their teaching had improved and in what ways. Then, one performance area at a time, teachers were asked specifically how much they had improved and in what ways.

The performance areas include Time on Task for Reading; Learning Environment for Reading; Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills; Teaching and Learning Materials; and Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results. During interviews with observed teachers, teachers were asked to rate themselves on the degree to which they improved on each of the five performance areas since they started implementing *Maziko a Kuwerenga* program in their classrooms, using a scale of Significant, Some, or Little/No Improvement. Results were compared across high and low performing schools and for teachers who taught Standards 1, 2, and 4.

The team also collected head teacher ratings of their teachers' improvement during the school visits. Head teachers were asked how much their teachers as a whole had improved, and in what ways. Results were compared for head teachers and teachers and for high and low performing schools.

Overall Teacher Self-Ratings by Performance Area

Key Findings

Finding 1: Overall, about half (48%) of the teachers in both high and low performing schools judged themselves to have made Significant Improvement in three of the five areas since they started implementing the Maziko a Kuwerenga program: Learning Environment for Reading; Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills; and Teaching and Learning Materials.

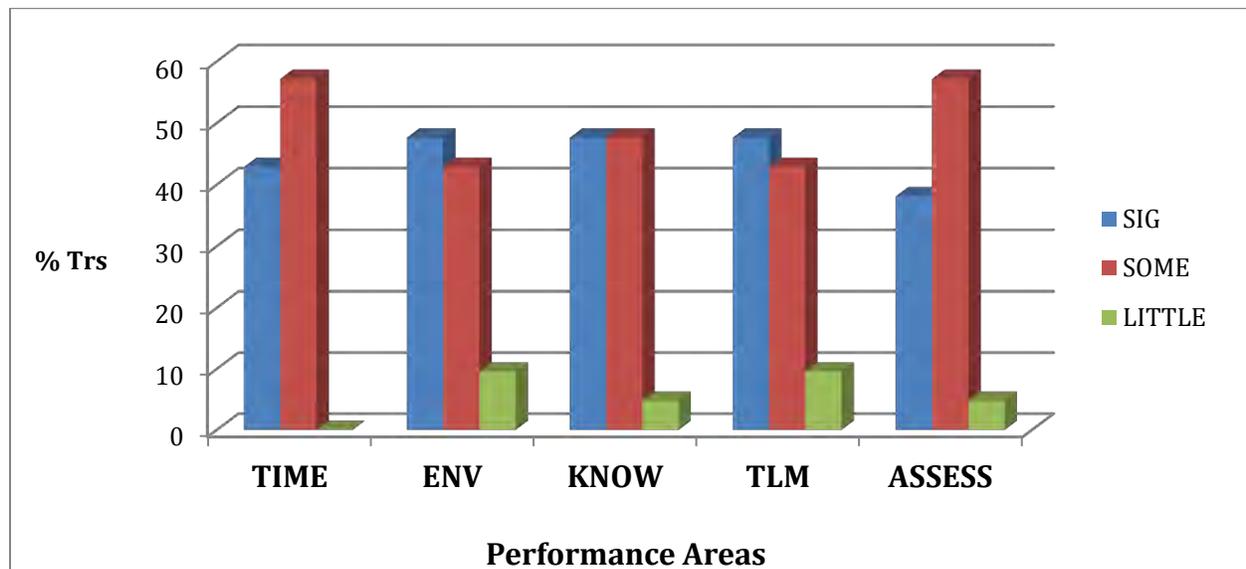
Finding 2: Teachers reported (57%) that they made Some Improvement in Time on Task for Reading and Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results areas.

Finding 3: Ten percent of teachers rated their level of improvement as Little in Teaching and Learning Materials and Learning Environment for Reading.

Supporting Data

Overall, teachers indicated making improvement on all five performance areas (*Figure 7*).

Figure 7: Overall Teacher Improvement Self-Ratings in Performance Areas



Blue=Significant Improvement, Red=Some Improvement, Green=Little or No Improvement

Ratings on Performance Area 1: Time on Task for Reading

Teacher self-ratings of improvement in their performance in using time efficiently for teaching reading were largely positive. Slightly fewer than half (43%) of the teachers judged their performance to have improved significantly in this area. A higher proportion of teachers judged their skills as progressing somewhat (Some Improvement) for a number of reasons. Teachers considered that they used time efficiently by starting classes promptly and covering most of the five elements of the reading program.

There was consensus among teachers that the extended length of the *Nditha Kuwerenga* lesson (by Malawian standards) affected children’s attention span.

Tardiness and recurring pupil absenteeism significantly reduced time on task for many learners and forced teachers to repeat lessons as they taught a different cohort of learners from day to day. Large classes were mentioned as another reason for not being able to use instructional time efficiently. Both teachers and head teachers noted that it “is very difficult to teach the five reading elements effectively and provide the needed extra and individual support to struggling learners in classes in excess of 60” (schools # 1, 2, and 4).

At school #8, teachers said instructional time was wasted because of a lack of resources. Teachers in the three Standard 1 classes shared the limited copies of *Nditha Kuwerenga* books and had to rotate them among the classes. At school #3, time was wasted at both school and classroom levels. Except for two teachers, the head teacher and teachers reported late for classes, while a Standard 4 teacher without a lesson plan spent 46 minutes of instructional time asking learners to re-read a story, and copy three questions from the chalk board and answer them; the teacher then graded the work and reread the story

but eventually ran out of ideas and ended the lesson. A similar class at school #5 also wasted learners’ time by requiring them to take turns reading a story and then provide synonyms for underlined words in five sentences for an entire 51 minutes. Learners could be heard grumbling about having learned the lesson several times already.

Ratings on Performance Area 2: Learning Environment for Reading

This performance area related to teachers’ skills in creating a physical, social, and psychological environment conducive to learning to read. For the most part, around half (48%) and fewer than half (43%) of the overall sample of teachers considered their skills in creating environments appropriate for teaching and learning how to read to have improved significantly and to some degree, respectively. Reasons for significant improvement were associated with teachers’ management skills in creating an effective grouping system in organizing learners for group

The Promise and Perils of the One Hour Long Lessons

Maziko a Kuwerenga requires that schools allocate an extra one hour of instruction for teachers to teach the five elements of reading as prescribed in the scripted lesson plans and trainings. Teachers varied in their use of the “extra” instructional time to focus on reading skills. While teachers liked the scripted lesson plans and the *Nditha Kuwerenga* reader, they were divided in whether they thought the extended time was productive.

A number of teachers, head teachers, and PEAs agreed that children needed to have sufficient time for learning and guided practice but had difficulty keeping young children focused for extended periods of time. The intensity and range of activities to be completed was considered excessive, resulting in “children getting confused during lessons... children forget what they learn...lose interest since there are so many activities,” revealing that “sometimes even us as teachers *timabalikaso* (are bewildered and lose track of what to do).”

During some classroom observations, it was clear children were gradually losing concentration after around 30 to 35 minutes by making noise, fidgeting, playing around, bothering other learners, and seeking permission to go outside, one after another. At the same time, teachers said the hour-long session was considered insufficient to cover all activities specified in the scripted lesson. Two of the four PEAs interviewed highlighted the need for teachers to have management activities to sustain children’s engagement with the lessons.

work; gender sensitivity by calling on girls and boys to participate; and encouraging interaction among learners. In contrast to teachers' perceptions of improvement as "significant" or "some," interaction among learners was the least observed (9%) component in the classroom observations. In 43% of the classrooms, learners were seated in groups throughout the lesson without a task necessitating completion as a group activity. Learners sat in large groups mostly to have access to a single book or were simply asked to get in groups (schools # 1, 2, and 3) but did not interact. At school #3, the permanence of the solid concrete seating slabs arranged in groups was by default rather than a deliberate effort to provide spaces for learner interaction.

Ratings in Performance Area 3: Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills

Teachers' self-ratings of improvement in this area included both their knowledge and teaching of the five key reading skills: phonological awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. In addition, it included knowledge and application of the lesson cycle for *Maziko a Kuwerenga* that comprises a four-stage lesson routine of developing an advance organizer; modeling/demonstrating where a teacher models good practice of how to complete a reading skill; followed by guided practice as a whole class and then in groups; and finally, independent application of the just-learned skill.

In interviews of observed teachers, all demonstrated, effortlessly, knowledge of the five components of reading skills and provided definitions and or examples of skills as well as the framework and associated routines. Teachers were unanimous in associating the significant ratings in improvement in their knowledge and teaching of reading skills with the regular training and support from MTPDS and PEAs. Teachers judged the training an eye opener:

"... we have learned a lot about teaching reading...I didn't know that children needed to learn all these things...letter sounds? Now children can read and write by end of first term in Standard 1."

Teachers said that frequent supervision, coaching, and school-based CPD were helpful in improving their areas of weakness and increasing understanding of literacy skills. At school #1, the head teacher supervised teachers and required them to report progress of their lessons on a regular basis. Teacher commitment and creativity also enhanced teachers' knowledge and teaching of reading skills (schools #1, 5, & 7). Head teachers at schools #4 and #6 offered to teach Standard 1 and 2 respectively, while a Standard 7 teacher at school #7 requested to be reassigned to Standard 1 after attending training.

During interviews teachers reported that they have learned skills in teaching children how to read and "children are now able to read with the new approach ...there is no *anikumeto*³ in teacher training colleges, but now we know how to teach effectively" (schools # 1, 2, and 3).

All teachers indicated that, given the opportunity, they would like to attend additional trainings to continue to sharpen their knowledge and skills in teaching reading. Further training and coaching was particularly mentioned in letter sounds as one area that teachers required

³ *Anikumeto* refers to the approach of *Maziko a Kuwerenga* of sequencing the introduction of letters according to their frequency of use in the Chichewa language (beginning with 'A', then 'N', then 'I', and so forth) rather than using the traditional A-B-C sequence.

additional work, “because this is a new concept and some sounds are difficult to articulate for us.” A few teachers said that their difficulty stemmed in part from the fact that different PEAs presented the sounds differently.

Teachers say they have trained learners to perform the thumbs up/down; hand, head/neck and other body gestures to denote short and long sounds; differentiate between soft and hard intonations; and recite the steps or rules. As observers also noted in the class visits, children chanted and practiced saying sounds, syllables, and words and gestured the thumbs up/down routine.

Ratings in Performance Area 4: Teaching and Learning Materials

The performance area of Teaching and Learning Materials addresses the use of TLMs by both teachers and learners. The program provided the *Nditha Kuwerenga* reader for all learners in Standard 1 and scripted lesson plans for teachers. Around half of the teachers judged their level

TALULAR in Action

Tinkering with Two Evils: Teaching a Very Large Class under a Tree

A Standard 1 class is conducted under a tree at school #7. In all, 109 learners are enrolled in the class, but today 96 (91%) have managed to make it to school. Many times over, teachers have faulted very large class sizes such as this as grounds for conducting instruction without teaching aids, singling out the chalkboard as the only available option for TLM.

The teacher is a man likely in his forties. He travels 16 km to get to the school as do other teachers at the school. Standard 1 class was not his choice, but he was interested when he was given the opportunity to attend the *Maziko a Kuwerenga* trainings and requested to be reassigned from Standard 7. The learners are enthusiastic as they bellow out syllables and songs he taught them for reinforcing learning of letters and sounds, show thumbs up/down, and trace letters with body movements. TLMs are displayed and used liberally throughout the lesson using slate tablets, word trees, and hand-made word cards posted on trees, desks, and rocks. Learners are asked to read words cards and identify letters, sounds, and syllables.

of improvement as significant largely due to the CPD, where they were taught about the critical role that TLMs play in building reading skills among young children. Trainers also strongly encouraged teachers to produce and use TLM during instruction.

Teachers said that challenges associated with TLMs included a lack of security in the schools where doors were

completely missing or had no secure locks; lack of charts, pencils, pens, and materials for creating TLMs; and teaching under trees.

Ratings in Performance Area 5: Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results

Teaching performance in this area related to assessing learners’ understanding during lessons and providing feedback, remediation, and enrichment activities to struggling learners. The program provided a continuous assessment component during trainings to help teachers measure their learners’ progress and inform instruction. Assessment was the least-mentioned area in which teachers indicated significant improvement. Slightly over a third (38%) of the teachers were confident they had improved significantly. Over half (57%) said they improved to some extent. Teacher efforts were observed during lesson observations in assessing learners through various measures: answering questions; identifying letter sounds; making words with letters; decoding syllables and words into sounds and vice versa; and reading and writing exercises. Teachers said monthly and weekly assessments were administered in specific skills

and informed subsequent instruction. Teachers acknowledged the difficulties they face in assessing their learners. Large class sizes made it impossible to gauge all learners' standing and burdened individual support.

Although teachers self-reported progress in this performance area, observers found that teachers continue to have difficulties in using their assessment to differentiate instruction and content to focus on individuals and groups of learners who are at differing levels of ability. This is an area that will need further training and support in the future.

Teacher Self-ratings of Improvement by High and Low Performing Schools

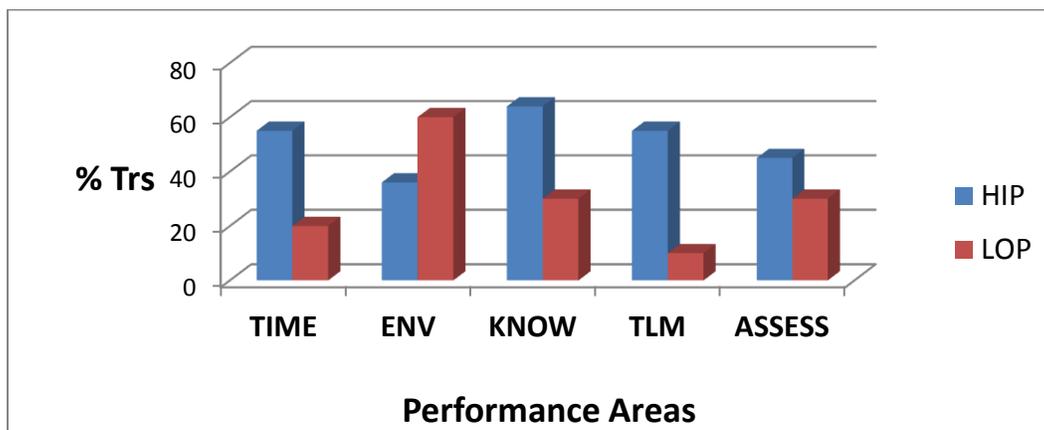
Key Finding

Finding 1: In general, the results mirrored the overall teacher rating pattern: a higher proportion of teachers in high performing schools indicated significant improvement in Time on Task; Knowledge of Teaching Reading Skills; and Teaching and Learning Materials.

Supporting Data

Teacher self-ratings of improvement were analyzed based on whether they taught in a high or low performing school. Results are presented in *Figure 8*.

Figure 8: Teachers' Self-Ratings of Improvement by Performance Areas for High/Low Performing Schools



HIP=High Performing, LOP=Low Performing

Teachers in high performing schools rated their degree of improvement higher in four of the five performance areas: Time for Teaching Reading, Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills, Teaching and Learning Materials, and Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results. In the performance area of Learning Environment for Reading, teachers in low performing schools rated their improvement higher.

Degree of Improvement by Standard

Key Findings

Finding 1: Standard 1 teachers mostly rated themselves as having made Significant Improvement across the five performance areas.

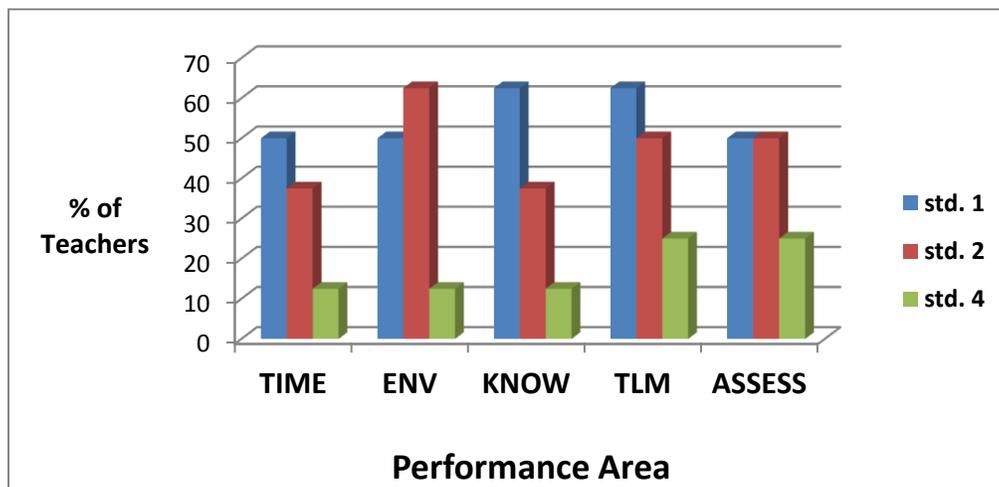
Finding 2: Standard 2 teachers mostly rated themselves as having made Some improvement in the five performance areas.

Finding 3: Standard 4 teachers mostly rated themselves as having made Little or No Improvement in the five performance areas.

Supporting Data

An analysis was conducted of teachers' self-ratings of Significant Improvement in each of the five performance areas, by standard taught (*Figure 9*).

Figure 9: Teachers' Self-Ratings of Significant Improvement by Standard



Overall, Standard 1 teachers reported higher levels of improvement in their skills than teachers in Standards 2 and 4. About two-thirds (67.5%) of the Standard 1 teachers assessed themselves to have made Significant Improvement across the five performance areas compared to slightly under half (47.5%) of Standard 2 and a fourth (25%) of the Standard 4 teachers. Standard 2 teachers mostly rated themselves to have made Some Improvement in these target performance areas, except in the areas of Teaching and Learning Materials and Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results, where they said they made Little or No Improvement. Standard 4 teachers rated themselves the lowest; their weakest areas were Time on Task for Reading, Learning Environment for Reading, and Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills.

It is predictable that Standard 1 teachers would report the most improvement, since the intervention focused on Standard 1 teachers; they received the most training and follow-up coaching; and they received the *Nditha Kuwerenga* readers and scripted lesson plans to support their lessons. Low self-ratings for Standard 4 teachers may be due to the fact that they received

less direct instruction in performance areas related to reading than Standard 1 and 2 teachers, and thus they may feel less confident in their skills in the reading-specific performance areas.

Head Teacher Ratings of Teacher Improvement

Key Findings

Finding 1: Head teachers were more positive than teachers in their ratings of teachers' improvement at their schools.

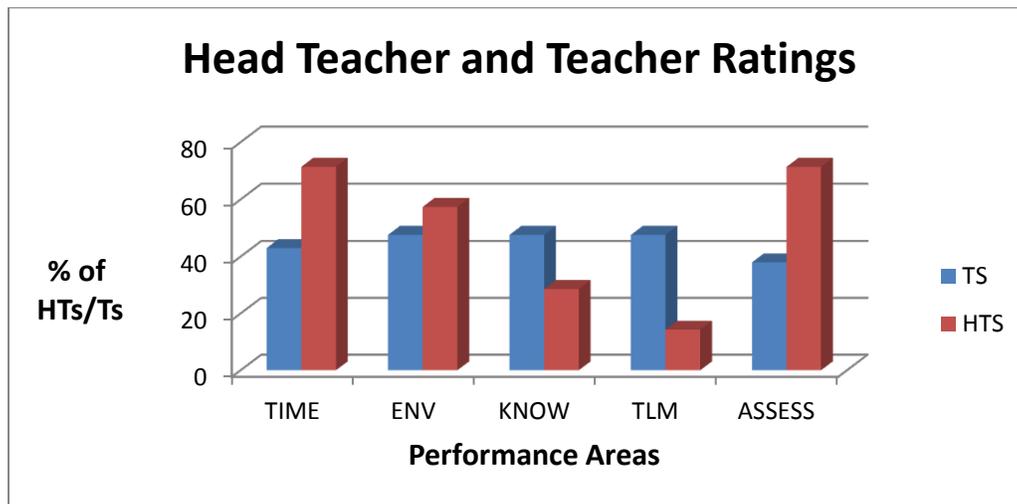
Finding 2: Head teachers rated their teachers as improving significantly in the performance areas of Time on Task for Reading, Learning Environment for Reading, and Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results.

Head teachers were also asked to rate the level of improvement on the performance areas for the teachers as a whole in their schools in order to get another perspective on teachers' improvement.

Supporting Data

Generally, head teachers were more positive than teachers in assessing levels of improvement (*Figure 10*).

Figure 10: Overall Head Teacher and Teacher Ratings of Significant Improvement

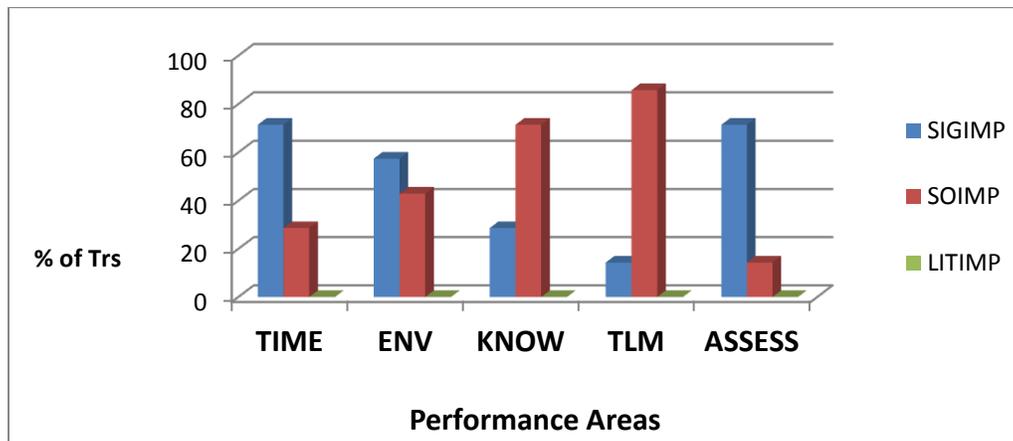


Teachers' self-ratings indicated they thought they had improved significantly in Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills, Learning Environment for Reading, and Teaching and Learning Materials. Head teachers considered teachers' skills to have improved significantly in Time on Task for Reading, Learning Environment for Reading, and Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results; they thought teachers needed to improve in Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills and Teaching and Learning Materials.

Head teachers thought their teachers improved significantly in using instructional time for reading tasks, creating an environment for enhancing learning, and assessing learners'

understandings and providing feedback as well as being able to use the assessment results for instruction (**Figure 11**).

Figure 11: Head Teacher Ratings by Performance Area



SIGIMP=Significant Improvement, SOIMP=Some Improvement, LITIMP=Little Improvement

Head teachers reported Significant Improvement in the performance dimension of Time on Task for Reading. Their rationale was that teachers used time well by starting classes on time, using all the time on teaching and covering the five reading skills: phonological awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

In the performance area of Learning Environment for Reading, head teachers perceived the provision of *Nditha Kuwernga* books to Standard 1 pupils to have significantly improved the availability of TLMs, therefore creating a conducive environment for teaching reading. At school #8, provision of desks, including for Standard 1 learners, also enhanced the environment for learning. Head teachers also noted the increased participation of boys and girls in activities. Girls as well as boys were appointed as group leaders, and their names were displayed in the head teachers' offices in some of the schools (school #1 and #2).

Head teachers also rated teacher improvement as significant in the performance area of Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results. The school heads mentioned teachers' routines of calling on individual learners, groups, rows, those wearing uniforms, and those not wearing uniforms, or girls only and boys only, to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Pupils in these flexible groups were asked to identify letter names and sounds, read syllables and words, combine syllables to make words, and read sentences as teachers' ways of assessing learners. The use of group work and weekly assessments of targeted areas was also mentioned as having improved teachers' skills in assessing learners. During interviews head teachers at schools #7 and #8 ascribed the improvements in assessment to the approaches that target a single reading skill as opposed to multiple skills, as was previously done during PCAR curriculum.

Performance areas in which head teachers judged teachers to have made Some Improvement included both TLMs and Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills. The head teachers felt that while teachers had attended multiple trainings on reading, they still needed additional sessions to "increase their knowledge and take care of the problem of sounding out letters, which

teachers still have” (head teacher, school #2). They noted that teachers started reading classes on time and covered all elements of the *Nditha Kuwerenga* lessons.

Headteacher Ratings by High and Low Performing Schools

Key Findings

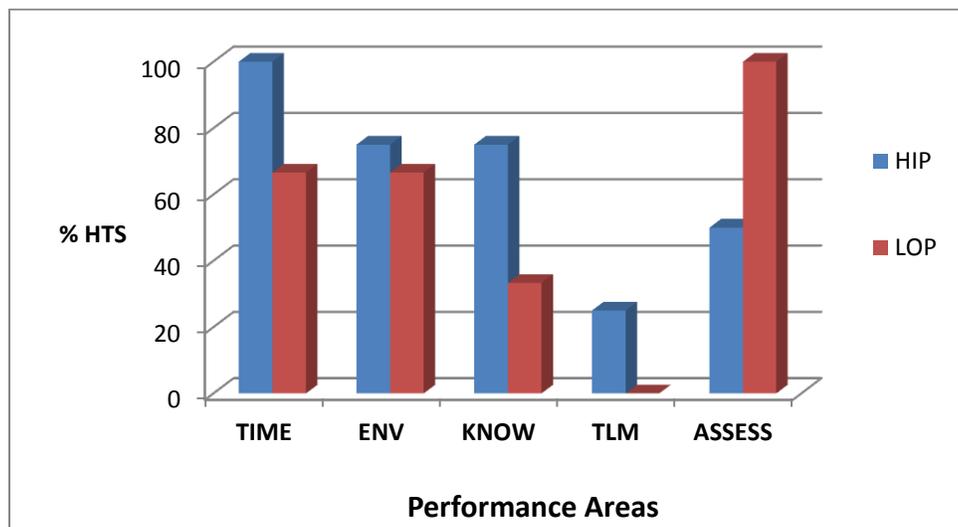
Finding 1: Head teachers in high performing schools showed higher rates of Significant Improvement of teachers compared to head teachers of low performing schools. Their highest ratings of their teachers were in Time on Task for Reading, Learning Environment for Reading, and Knowledge and Teaching of Reading.

Finding 2: Head teachers in low performing schools rated their teachers as significantly improved in Assessment, Feedback, and Use of Results.

Supporting Data

An analysis of head teachers’ ratings was conducted by high and low school performance and showed higher rates in Significant Improvement in high performing schools than among low performing schools (**Figure 12**).

Figure 12: Head Teacher Ratings of Teacher Improvement by High and Low Performing Schools



HIP=High Performing, LOP=Low Performing

Head teachers in high performing schools rated their teachers as having improved significantly in their use of time for teaching reading, creating a learning environment for reading, and knowledge and teaching of reading skills. Head teachers in low performing schools rated teachers as significantly improved in assessment, creating a learning environment for reading, and knowledge and teaching of reading skills. According to head teachers, both groups showed the least improvement in the use of teaching and learning materials.

In conclusion, teachers in both high and low performing schools thought their teaching had improved during their participation in MTPDS training and follow-up coaching. The overall higher head teacher ratings of teacher improvement may be related to teachers’ tendency to be

conservative in reporting their own progress. It is interesting to note, however, that head teachers overall named areas related to reading as being the most improved in their schools; time for teaching reading, creating a learning environment for reading, and knowledge and teaching of reading skills were areas mentioned by head teachers in both high and low performing schools.

Results—Factors Affecting School Performance

Introduction

In this section factors common to high performing schools are presented, followed by factors common to low performing schools. Together these sections address the following research question:

1. What other factors, on top of MTPDS support, had a noticeable impact on teaching and learning performance at schools?

All schools in the study faced a number of serious issues, including some large classes of over 100 pupils (as opposed to an official class size target of 60 pupils); high pupil absenteeism, with individuals coming and going, creating huge gaps in learning; insufficient classroom buildings and classes held outside under a tree; classrooms that could not be secured after hours, which made a print-rich environment difficult to maintain; a shortage of teaching and learning materials, in spite of MTPDS-supplied learners' books; a lack of a culture of reading in the community; and so on. These challenges were present in both high and low performing schools. ***A critical factor was not whether the school and community had these challenges but how they addressed the challenges they faced.***

MTPDS factors and “other” factors were not distinct. It is the interaction of MTPDS project inputs—mainly, training, materials, and coaching, with support from PEAs—combined with school-community factors such as leadership, collaboration and partnerships within the school and with the community, care for the learning environment, and a “can do” spirit of taking initiative to do what one *can* do, that distinguished the high performing schools from the others.

The following section examines factors that emerged from school visits, classroom observations, interviews, and focus groups: Teacher Professional Development, Collaboration and Partnerships, Learning Environment and Leadership Skills. These same factors seem to be important in both high and low performing schools, in their presence or absence, as supportive or inhibiting factors.

Each factor will be discussed, with findings and supporting examples from high and low performing schools.

Emerging Factors that Distinguish High and Low Performing Schools

Teacher Professional Development

In high performing schools, there was school ownership of teacher professional development.

Finding 1: MTPDS trainings received by key district implementers, such as PEAs, key teachers, and head teachers before the start of each activity contributed to the implementation of the program in practice.

In all schools, implementers went into the program with clear knowledge of what they were supposed to do. Many teachers and head teachers reported that they had five or six trainings; however, a difference was seen in how the training was applied in schools and classrooms, when teachers and head teachers took ownership of their own professional development.

Teachers in high performing schools organized “joint teaching” arrangements with peer teachers where they prepared materials together, discussed problems they were having, and observed each other and gave feedback. Teachers also provided demonstration lessons for other teachers and helped each other with making the sounds of the letters.



Two teachers engage in Joint Teaching, a peer coaching activity among colleagues who seek to improve their own teaching. These peer mentors observe each other as well as other teachers, give feedback and suggestions, make teaching and learning materials together, and discuss classroom problems and possible solutions. They also organized a reading lesson last September during a district marketing event to showcase the reading program to district officials and organizations. Their special bond enhances learning for their pupils.

Finding 2: High performing schools perceived school-based CPD activity as a necessary strategy for ensuring that teachers share knowledge and skills that Standard 1 teachers gained during the Maziko a Kuwerenga trainings.

A head teacher in one of the high performing schools reported that training of teachers at zone level was followed by a series of school-based CPD sessions. Coaches provided some of these CPDs, and teachers who had attended MTPDS trainings also provided school-based sessions for other teachers. As a result, Standard 4 teachers who did not attend the zone training were able to demonstrate

knowledge of the five key components of the reading program during teacher observations and interviews.

Finding 3: Teachers in the high performing schools showed that they were able to utilize the support received during the trainings and follow-up coaching.

Head teachers and teachers at high performing schools reported that during the implementation of the reading program, frequent monitoring visits were made to schools by MTPDS staff and the PEAs. Such visits were used for demonstration lessons and coaching sessions. The visits also created opportunities for teachers to seek support in the specific areas where they were having difficulties.

During teacher observations they demonstrated an understanding of the five key components of the reading program and lesson cycle, as well as higher use, in actual practice, of the teaching and learning components emphasized in MTPDS training and in the class observation instrument.

***Finding 4:** Schools where teachers attended other continuous professional trainings in addition to those provided by MTPDS enjoyed greater improvement in the implementation of the reading program.*

Teachers and head teachers in two of the high performing schools acknowledged the support that they received from other organizations. For example, they cited their participation in Leadership and Literacy trainings conducted by other organizations as a contributing factor to their success in the reading program. They felt knowledge and skills they acquired during these trainings assisted them to approach the reading program with an open and positive mindset.

In low performing schools, there was limited transfer to classroom practice of teacher professional development strategies.

***Finding 1:** Even though teachers and head teachers in these schools received the same MTPDS training and follow-up coaching as other schools, they did not implement the program in actual practice to the extent that school personnel in higher performing schools did.*

Results of classroom observations show that in the MTPDS components of teaching and learning on the classroom observation instrument, teachers in low performing schools did not implement the program in actual practice to the same extent as teachers in high performing schools. They scored lower in use of class time, learner engagement, encouragement of learners, knowledge of reading program skills, teaching the five key reading skills, use of TLMs by the teacher, and monitoring of learners' understanding during lessons.

***Finding 2:** Teachers and classrooms in low performing schools typically lacked the dynamics associated with high pupil achievement.*

In a number of classrooms in low performing schools, compared to high performing schools, class observations showed the inefficient use of class time, less engagement of learners' attention, less warmth and friendliness on the part of teachers, less encouragement of learners, less monitoring of learners' understanding during the lesson, and less feedback about their responses. These teachers need more support to be able to implement the reading program in such a way as to achieve the intended results.

Collaboration and Partnerships

In high performing schools, there was strong collaboration and partnerships between and among teachers, head teachers, and the community.

***Finding 1:** Teachers in the high performing schools collaborated and supported each other more in implementing the reading program than their counterparts in the low performing schools.*

At one of the high performing schools, for example, teachers said during interviews that they planned together, prepared teaching materials together, and did some team teaching together; and they showed the observers the materials they created. In another high performing school, teachers who had not attended trainings on the implementation of the reading program were encouraged by the head teacher to observe those who received the training. A Standard 4 teacher at the same school demonstrated knowledge of the key components of the reading

program. During the teacher interview a number of teachers said they had enhanced their knowledge and skills by observing teachers who attended the MTPDS trainings.

Finding 2: In high performing schools, the head teacher set expectations that the school staff will work together and support each other. The head teacher also monitored instruction, and teachers reported that the head “knows what is going on” in classrooms and can be a resource to teachers.

In high performing schools, teachers said the head teacher monitored and supported them. They knew the expectations of the head teachers and worked towards the achievement of the objectives of the reading program. For example, at two high performing schools, teachers reported that their head teachers encourage them to learn from each other through lesson observation. They also said that they consult their head teachers whenever they encounter professional challenges.

Finding 3: Greater collaboration between schools and communities was evident in high performing schools.

Teachers and parents in high performing schools have established cordial working relationships that allow the two parties to collaborate. For example, parents in these schools were willing to support teachers to implement the reading program. They were more likely to observe reading lessons, monitor children’s reading at home, and provide learning materials such as exercise books to their children when these are in short supply at school.

Parents who expressed concern over teacher absenteeism cited a lack of teacher housing, which forces teachers to travel long distances and stay away from the school. However, communities of high performing schools were making efforts to address the cause of this problem. At one of these schools, parents revealed that they constructed a teacher’s house so that some teachers could stay on the campus. At another school, the community has molded bricks to construct additional teachers’ houses. At yet another school, the community built a house for a female teacher because they wanted a good role model for their girl children in the community.



The community of this school prides itself on its teachers and actively monitors and supports the instructional program. This village chief (right) drops in frequently to observe teaching and learning in classes. Accompanying him is a Standard 2 teacher.

In low performing schools, there was limited collaboration and partnership between and among teachers, head teachers, and the community.

Finding 1: Teachers in the low performing schools revealed limited professional collaboration. In three of the low performing schools, teachers who teach classes that are not targeted for the implementation of the reading program did not have any idea of its requirements. Some

teachers said they were not comfortable being observed. During class observations their implementation of the reading program revealed limited knowledge and expertise. Student teachers who were at two of the schools had no knowledge of the reading program.

Finding 2: In low performing schools there were signs that collaboration between teachers and head teachers was weak. Teachers said that the head teacher did not organize meetings for them to learn from the teachers who had attended the MTPDS trainings about the knowledge and skills emphasized in the reading program. They also said that their head teachers did not encourage them to observe each other's lessons.

Finding 3: Teachers and parents in low performing schools had limited working relationships. Parents in three of the four low performing schools expressed a lack of knowledge of the reading program.

In one of the schools parents complained about having been sent back by the head teacher when they wanted to observe lessons. In another school, parents said they did not know what they needed to do to support efforts by teachers to teach their children in reading.

One school in this group, however, was an exception. Parents and teachers worked together to improve the reading skills of children. The community even instituted a group that observes lessons and monitors learner absenteeism.

Finding 4: *Some parents in low performing schools saw their roles in the education of their children as powerless. They said responsibility for educating children rests with the government; once they send their children to school, they hand over their responsibility to the teachers.*

When asked if they tried to find out about the reading program from the teachers, parents in one of the schools said they did not think it was their responsibility to do so. They revealed that they had never supported their children with reading, although some parents in low performing schools were able to make letter sounds that they learned from their children at home. Parents at one of the schools were surprised when asked about the support they gave their children in learning to read. They also said that observing teachers during reading lessons would be interfering in teachers' work.

There was one exception among the low performing schools where the community instituted a team that goes round looking for absent children to send them back to school. They also had a Community Representative whose task was to mobilize chiefs and parents to support their children to go to school and benefit from the reading program.

Learning Environment

In high performing schools, improvisation was evident in addressing learning environment challenges.

Finding 1: *Teachers in all eight schools reported a shortage of teaching and learning materials such as learner's books, teacher's guides, exercise books, pens, pencils, and chart paper. However, in high performing schools teachers were able to improvise and use locally available materials as alternative teaching resources.*

During class observations teachers in high performing schools were seen using real objects, word cards, sentence strips, and word trees. On the other hand, teachers in the low performing schools did not take the initiative to improvise to the extent that their counterparts in high performing schools did.

Finding 2: In high performing schools communities became involved in creatively solving some issues related to the learning environment.

In three of the high performing schools, after parents noticed a positive change in their children's reading skills, they were motivated to support the program. They provided reading materials such as old books, newspapers, and reading boards. At one of these schools some parents brought pieces of cloth that had some text on them for learners to use during reading lessons. In other schools parents worked with the SMC and PTA members to start observing reading lessons. At another school, the village chief observes lessons.



Community Focus Group Discussion. *These SMC members and parents and community members share some of the ways they have worked with the school to solve some of the issues faced by teachers and learners at their community school. The village chief is one of the participants.*

school feeding program so that learners would not be absent from school because of hunger.

Finding 4: *Teachers in high performing schools showed through their teaching that they put extra effort and interest in their work.*

Teachers in high performing schools demonstrated creativity and enthusiasm in their teaching. Head teachers and community members commented on the resourcefulness of their teachers. Parents at one school described their Standard 1 teacher as someone who has interest and skill in teaching younger children to read. This teacher also invited parents to school to discuss their children's progress in the reading program.

In low performing schools, there was a lack of initiative and creativity in addressing challenges in the learning environment.

Finding 1: *The physical condition of classroom buildings and school sites at low performing schools showed neglect and a lack of initiative.*

While resources were very limited in all schools visited, in some low performing schools the neglect of classrooms and the school sites contributed to a negative environment for learning.

Finding 3: *Generally learner attendance was a concern in all of the eight schools. However, in high performing schools, communities have instituted mechanisms for monitoring learner absenteeism.*

Communities in all the high performing schools have instituted mechanisms for monitoring learner attendance. At one school SMC and PTA members, with the support of their chiefs, instituted a fine for any parent whose child is absent. They also observed lessons as a way of reinforcing learner attendance. One community decided to grow soya beans, to use for a

Piles of old, broken desks were found in the back of a number of classrooms, taking up valuable class space. In one Standard 1 classroom, warped boards were spread out over the concrete floor. Pupils sitting on the boards could easily get their fingers smashed under them. Some chalkboards were so worn that it was nearly impossible to see what the teacher had written.

Finding 2: Teachers in low performing schools used few teaching and learning materials. While there was a shortage of both (those for teacher use and those for learner use), teachers depended on the chalkboard and exercise books.

Pupils in both high and low performing schools used few learning materials during classroom observations. Teachers in low performing schools also lacked teaching materials (used by the teacher) and relied mainly on the chalkboard.

Finding 3: Though learner absenteeism was a common challenge in both low and high performing schools, the way different communities addressed this issue made a difference.

Communities in most of the low performing schools did not have a system for checking on learner absenteeism. For example, parents at one of these schools said they thought learner absenteeism was not an issue in teaching and learning. They revealed that they take their children to the farms or markets during school days. It did not occur to them that this would cause a disruption in their children`s learning.

Instructional Leadership and Monitoring

In high performing schools, strong instructional leadership and monitoring was evident.

Finding 1: High performing schools demonstrated efficient management and organization.

School started on time, and classes started on time. School campuses were business-like; there was little idleness. At one of the schools the head teacher organized a meeting where teachers and consultants interacted and introduced themselves to each other.

Finding 2: Teachers in high performing schools reported that they were frequently visited and supported by their head teachers and other teachers, who functioned as instructional leaders and peer coaches.

After each cycle of training, head teachers in these high performing schools organized meetings at which teachers shared what was covered during the training. They monitored implementation of the program and got progress reports from the teachers. Head teachers organized school-based CPD sessions to ensure that teachers who received training in the reading program shared their knowledge and skills with their colleagues.

Finding 3: Teachers, head teachers and communities took initiative in solving common problems.

Teachers, head teachers, and communities in the high performing schools were able to find alternative means of addressing challenges. For example, a teacher at one such school who taught under a tree improvised stands for displaying word and sentence cards. Another school used literacy fairs and open days to motivate parents to support their children`s reading. To address the issue of learner absenteeism, the community and their chief at one of the high

performing schools monitored lessons. They also agreed that any parent whose child was absent should pay a fine.

In low performing schools, there was weak instructional leadership with low initiation and teacher support.

Finding 1: *Head teachers in low performing schools provided limited support to their teachers.*

By their position, head teachers are expected to create opportunities for teachers to share skills and knowledge that they acquire during trainings. This was not the case in low performing schools, where head teachers did not take the initiative to use Standard 1 teachers as resource teachers for the other teachers.

Head teachers did not typically observe teachers teaching in the new reading program and give feedback. This role was left for the PEA and MTPDS.

Finding 2: *Head teachers in some low performing schools did not take the initiative to address issues of limited resources and other challenges creatively.*

Head teachers in low performing schools did not creatively address challenges of limited resources as their counterparts in high performing schools did. Repairing or clearing piles of broken desks from classrooms and repainting chalkboard surfaces would enhance the instructional program for learners in modest, do-able ways.

Suggestions from Stakeholders

Introduction

In this section, suggestions from stakeholders will be shared. This information was gathered from interviews and focus groups with teachers, head teachers, community members, pupils, and PEAs. It addresses research question 4:

1. How can this information about contextual factors inform future interventions on additional areas to provide support?

Suggestions from Stakeholders

Suggestions from various stakeholders (teachers, head teachers, community members, pupils) are combined to prevent repetition. They are presented by suggestions for what schools can do, what communities can do, and what government can do to improve program implementation, and ultimately, pupils' learning to read.

Suggestions for what the school can do:

- Organize frequent school-based CPDs. Teachers who are competent in teaching the reading skills need to demonstrate and support the other teachers.
- Provide books to learners to read at home.

- Sensitize the community on the requirements of the reading program. The majority of the parents who attended the community interview did not know anything about the program and its requirements.

Suggestions for what the community can do:

- Provide temporary shelters for classes that are learning outside in order to minimize distractions.
- Parents should monitor what their children read in school.
- Parents should send their children to school regularly.
- Parents should monitor their children`s reading at home.

Suggestions for what government can do:

- Supply teaching and learning materials to schools, such as learners' reading books, chalk, charts, teachers' guides, note books.
- Post more teachers to schools so that teachers teach smaller classes.
- Support the community in their quest to construct more classroom blocks.
- Intensify CPD.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Conclusions and recommendations reflect the study findings and comments and suggestions from all stakeholders. They are provided to inform Government of Malawi and development partner decision making regarding future programmatic efforts and policy.

Conclusions

Conclusions are presented according to the research questions for the study.

To what degree, or level of intensity, did the particular schools and/or classrooms implement MTPDS-supported interventions in actual practice?

Good progress has been made in implementing MTPDS training in teaching reading; strong areas in actual practice include increased time for teaching reading, teachers' knowledge of teaching reading, and use of the lesson cycle, which includes the five key skills of reading. Head teachers and teachers say teachers have made significant improvement in their knowledge and practice, especially in teaching reading and creating environments that are conducive to learning.

More readers and supplemental reading materials are needed. Areas in need of further improvement include ways to increase learner participation and interaction in reading classes, the use of teaching and learning materials by learners, and support/remediation for struggling readers. A manageable assessment system that provides information on an individual pupil's

progress on a regular basis is needed, and teachers need help in using remediation activities for pupils who are in danger of falling behind.

All teachers and head teachers, in both high and low performing schools, perceived the quality of the MTPDS training and coaching by MTPDS staff and PEAs to be excellent. In high performing schools, the combination of training and frequent monitoring and coaching contributed significantly to the implementation in actual practice of the skills taught.

What were the dynamics within particular schools and/or classrooms which led to better or worse performance?

In high performing schools, teachers managed class time efficiently, used more teaching materials, and engaged learners more. Classes were active places where learners stayed on task because “things were happening.”

Teachers in high performing schools collaborated among themselves and with the head teacher. Standard 1 teachers, the primary focus of MTPDS training and materials, shared what they learned with Standard 2-4 teachers; teachers helped each other with phonics, which was new to them; and teachers demonstrated new methods for teaching reading at literacy fairs and open days.

In low performing schools, much class time was wasted on classroom management tasks, teachers used few teaching materials and relied mainly on the chalkboard, and learner interaction and engagement were weak. Learners were passive.

Teachers in low performing schools collaborated less with each other and the head teacher; there was less sharing and, thus, less spread of information and skills to other teachers. Teachers in these schools were not comfortable with other teachers observing them.

What other factors, on top of MTPDS support, had a noticeable impact on teaching and learning performance at schools?

In high performing schools and their communities, impact factors included evidence of teacher professional development and follow-up coaching leading to effective implementation of training in actual practice; collaboration and partnerships within and among teachers, teachers and head teachers, and schools and communities; pleasant learning environments; and instructional leadership—not only on the part of head teachers, but demonstrated by teachers who teach their colleagues and demonstrate reading lessons at literacy fairs and school open days.

In low performing schools the factors that characterized high performing schools (above) were limited or absent. Even when schools and communities had the resources to make basic improvements on their own, they lacked the initiative to do so.

Other factors that created challenges for the schools visited include large classes, teaching under a tree, poor security of property in open schools, high pupil absenteeism, teachers’ limited use of TLMs, and assessment of learners’ understanding of literacy skills.

How can this information about contextual factors inform future interventions on

additional areas to provide support?

The determining contextual factor is the initiative and “can do” spirit of the teachers, head teacher, and school communities. Future interventions must help teachers, head teachers, and school communities better understand these challenges and engage them in collaborative planning and problem solving.

A stronger effort is needed to integrate and strengthen what the SMCs are already doing. There is a need to better institutionalize the role of the SMCs with current decentralization efforts to engage communities to monitor quality of learning and to become more informed about school matters.

Recommendations***Training must be strengthened in three areas of need.***

In classroom observations of reading classes, teachers in both high and low performing schools needed improvement in three areas related to making the role of learners more active in the classroom:

- The use of small groups or pairs who read, interact, and work on tasks together;
- The use of TLMs by learners; and
- Regular assessment of individual pupil progress on the five key reading skills and targeted instruction to meet the needs of struggling readers and non-readers.

Teaching and learning materials need further development.

Learner’s books and teachers’ lesson plans need to be developed for Standards 2-4 and a basic package of low-cost materials for learners must be developed for teachers. Training (or reinforcement of training) in TALULAR should be provided for teachers in both high and low performing schools.

Teachers in low performing schools need to be able to visit “matched” schools

(schools with common characteristics and challenges, but in which pupils are performing at higher levels) and observe Standard 1 teachers demonstrating reading lessons using the readers and the five key reading skills. Head teachers might accompany their teachers and have them shadow the head teacher as he/she observes a class, meets with a community group, etc., and shares perspectives.

Teachers in high performing schools who demonstrate skills must be recognized

for their efforts and given opportunities to provide professional development for other teachers through demonstration lessons and sharing suggestions for other, new schools that are getting started in the program.

School-community partnerships need further development.

School-community collaboration was found to be an important factor in high performing schools in this study. Effective school training in community partnerships with schools, participatory leadership, and creating positive learning environments must be provided to head teachers and SMCs. Partnerships might be funded as joint small grant projects where both the school and the community make commitments for shared planning, problem solving, monitoring, and celebrating successes.

PEAs need continued support and involvement in future interventions.

PEAs are an invaluable resource to teachers in Malawi. They are well-trained, respected, and admired by teachers, and the monitoring and coaching they provide is an important factor in sustaining efforts in the system. PEAs need continued training, in advance of head teachers and teachers, in the leader's role in how to facilitate change at the school level and in the content of the teacher training. They also need opportunities to share promising practices and examples among themselves.

A number of factors influencing high and low performance emerged from this exploratory case study and lead to further questions.

Working with the MoEST, it will be important to determine priorities for further investigation of how these factors affect future efforts to improve the schools in Malawi.

Annex 1: MTPDS Research Questions, Sub-Questions & Data Sources

1. To what degree, or level of intensity, did the particular schools and/or classrooms implement MTPDS-supported interventions in actual practice?

1.1 What was the degree of *Implementation* of interventions in teaching performance in actual practice?

Degree of overall implementation by teachers of the 14 components of teaching and learning (classroom observations, observed teacher interviews, FGD with non-observed teachers)

Degree of implementation by high and low performing schools

1.2 What was the degree of *Improvement* in teaching performance? (classroom observation, observed teacher interview, headteacher interview)

Teachers' self-ratings of improvement in high and low performing schools

Head teachers' self-ratings of improvement in high and low performing schools

2. What are the dynamics within particular schools and/or classrooms which lead to better or worse performance?

How helpful was the training and support provided to improving teaching and learning? (teacher training, government officials, headteacher interview, observed and non-observed teacher interview, document review like visitors' log book)

What factors identified by teachers supported or inhibited efforts to improve teaching and learning in their classroom or school? (observed teacher interview, non-observed teacher FGD)

What factors identified by head teachers supported or inhibited efforts to Improve teaching and learning in their schools? (headteacher interview)

What factors identified by community and government officials e.g PEAs, supported or inhibited efforts to improve teaching and learning in the school? (government officials, community FGD)

What are some 'interesting' stories related to the Reading Program? Will emerge from interaction with stakeholders (Specific examples, photos)

Low resource, high performing schools

Improving situations

Parents and pupils

Active SMCs or mothers' groups
Learner engagement

3. What other factors, on top of MTPDS support, have a noticeable impact on teaching and learning performance in schools? (observed teacher interview, non-observed teacher FGD, headteacher interview, government officials, pupil FGD)

What other potential school factors influenced pupil performance, e.g., pupil attendance, teacher attendance, teacher qualifications, SMC support, use of school report card, etc.?

What are other factors that teachers, head teachers, and community members identify as having a noticeable impact on teaching and learning performance, in high and low performing schools?

What are other factors that government officials identify as having a noticeable impact on school performance?

4. How can this information about contextual factors inform future interventions on additional areas to provide support? (observed teacher interview, non-observed teacher FGD, headteacher interview, government officials)

What do teachers suggest about how the school, community and government can better support teachers in making improvements in the classroom?

What do headteachers suggest about how the school, community and government can better support teachers in making improvements in the classroom?

What do community members suggest about how the school, community and government can support teachers better?

What do government officials suggest about how the government can support teachers better in making improvements in early grade reading instruction?

Annex 2: Classroom Observation Instrument and Note-taking Form for 5 Key Skills of Reading

Classroom Observation Instrument

Target Group: Observed Teachers of Reading

<p>District: _____</p> <p>School: _____</p> <p>Date: _____ No. _____</p> <p>Standard: _____ Teacher: _____</p> <p>HP _____ LP _____</p>

Teacher Background Information

School: _____

Subject: READING _____

School Code: _____

Date of Observation: _____

Observation Start time: _____ End time: _____

Teacher: _____

Sex: Male ___ Female: ___

Training:

Academic Qualifications:

Class Conducted in:

Mother Tongue _____

Professional Qualifications:

English _____

Both (Mixed) _____

NOTE: Mark after the observation.

Years of Teaching Experience: _____

No. of MTPDS trainings: _____

Standard Observed: _____

Enrolment: Girls: _____ Boys: _____

Number present: Girls: ___ Boys: ___

Observer Name: _____

PERFORMANCE AREAS & RELATED COMPONENTS**PERFORMANCE AREA 1: TIME ON TASK for READING**

- Component #1: Time for Teaching and Learning to Read
- Component #2: Use of Class Time
- Component #3: Learner Engagement

PERFORMANCE AREA 2: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT for READING

- Component #4: Arrangement of Learners
- Component #5: Encouragement of Learners
- Component #6: Gender Sensitivity
- Component #7: Learner Interaction

PERFORMANCE AREA 3: KNOWLEDGE & TEACHING OF READING SKILLS

- Component #8: Knowledge of the Reading Program Skills
- Component #9: Teaching the Five Key Reading Skills

PERFORMANCE AREA 4: TEACHING & LEARNING MATERIALS

- Component #10: Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Teacher
- Component #11: Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Learners

PERFORMANCE AREA 5: ASSESSMENT, FEEDBACK & USE OF RESULTS

- Component #12: Monitoring Learners' Understanding During Lesson
- Component #13: Feedback
- Component #14: Differentiated Instruction

PERFORMANCE AREA 1: TIME ON TASK for READING
Component #1: Time for Teaching and Learning to Read

BEST PRACTICE: Learning to read is not a natural act like learning to speak. Learning to read requires a substantial amount of class time devoted to teaching and learning reading skills. One hour of reading instruction is recommended.

NOTE: Observe the entire reading lesson.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
No reading skills lesson aside from language arts, or lesson lasted less than 15 minutes.	Reading lesson lasted 15-30 minutes.	Reading lesson lasted 30-59 minutes.	Reading lesson lasted one hour or more.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Component #2: Use of Class Time

BEST PRACTICE: Class time for teaching and learning is maximized by starting class on time, efficiently tending to management tasks, continuing learning tasks without interruptions, and achieving tasks on time.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Teacher and learner activities do not begin on time; management tasks are not handled efficiently; <i>and/or</i> much class time is wasted.	Teacher and learner activities do not begin on time; management tasks are not handled efficiently; <i>and/or</i> some class time is wasted.	Teacher and learner activities begin promptly; management tasks are handled efficiently for the most part; and <i>most</i> time is used for teaching and learning to read.	Teacher and learner activities begin promptly and management tasks are handled quickly. Class time for teaching and learning to read is maximized. Tasks are achieved on time.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Component #3: Learner Engagement

BEST PRACTICE: Teacher ensures that all learners actively participate in the lesson (either individually, in pairs, in groups, or with the whole class). Learner participation in lesson activities helps learners to grasp the concepts and is directly related to learner achievement.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Learners sit passively, listen to the teacher, and watch the teacher; or, they only respond chorally.	<i>Few</i> learners actively participate in reading activities and most learners watch.	<i>Most</i> learners actively participate in reading activities. <i>A few</i> only watch.	<i>All</i> learners actively participate directly in reading activities.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

PERFORMANCE AREA 2: LEARNING ENVIRONMENT for READING
Component #4: Arrangement/Grouping of Learners

BEST PRACTICE: The physical learning environment enhances learning for all learners. The arrangement of furniture (if available) and/or learners allows for interaction among learners and contributes to a stimulating environment for learning. **NOTE:** The lack of furniture or even a classroom is not the issue.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Learners work as a whole class or individually.	Learners sit in groups but work as whole class or individually.	Learners sit in groups during the lesson and work as a group, in pairs, or individually.	Learners work in flexible group sizes depending on the task and learner skills: group work with the teacher, group or pair work, individual work, and whole class.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Component #5: Encouragement of Learners

BEST PRACTICE: Teachers encourage positive interpersonal relationships in a learning environment where learners feel comfortable and accepted. Through verbal and non-verbal behaviours, the teacher shows enthusiasm and interest in learning and encourages learners to be actively involved.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Teacher is rigid, punishes learners, and/or learners seem afraid of the teacher.	Teacher is neither rigid nor friendly. Learners do not fear teacher.	Teacher is warm, friendly and approachable.	Teacher is warm, friendly and approachable; teacher interacts with learners and actively encourages them to succeed by words or actions.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Component #6: Gender Sensitivity

BEST PRACTICE: Teachers and classrooms are gender-sensitive. Teachers treat girls and boys equally. They call on girls and boys, encourage girls and boys to succeed, give girls and boys roles as group leaders, and use girl-friendly and boy-friendly reading materials.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Teacher ignores or discourages girls or boys.	Teacher calls on some girls and some boys to participate but shows a preference for one over the other.	Teacher calls on girls and boys and encourages both equally.	Teacher treats girls and boys equally--calls on both, encourages both to succeed, gives both roles as group leaders, and uses girl-friendly and boy-friendly teaching and learning materials.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Component #7: Learner Interaction

BEST PRACTICE: Children learn by interacting with others about the concept being taught. Learning is enhanced when teachers encourage interaction among learners and learners are free to move purposefully around the classroom to get materials, to work with others, etc.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
<i>Little or no</i> interaction among learners. Teacher does not encourage learner interaction.	Learners are allowed to interact with each other but do not move from their assigned places or their movement is not purposeful. <i>Some</i> learners interact with each other.	<i>Most</i> learners interact with each other and move around as directed by the teacher.	Classroom is active and lively; learners have free movement and move purposefully to get materials and work with others, as needed.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

PERFORMANCE AREA 3: KNOWLEDGE AND TEACHING of READING SKILLS
Component #8: Knowledge of the Reading Program Skills

BEST PRACTICE: The teacher is thoroughly knowledgeable of the skills of the lesson (e.g., sounds in the language, sound and written form relationships, how to blend sounds, modelling of oral reading fluency, etc.) and explanations are accurate and clear to the learners. When teachers know the content well, they can give multiple examples and explain concepts in different ways.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
The teacher does not demonstrate knowledge of methods of reading instruction, or explanations are incorrect or not clear to learners.	The teacher demonstrates <i>some</i> knowledge of teaching reading skills and/or some explanations are not clear to learners.	The teacher makes no errors in teaching reading skills and most explanations are clear to learners.	The teacher shows that he or she knows the reading skills being taught. Explanations are clear and the teacher can elaborate by using several examples and/or explains in different ways to reach all learners.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Component #9: Teaching the Five Key Reading Skills

BEST PRACTICE: Reading lessons include all five of the key reading skills:

- 1) phonemic awareness
- 2) phonics
- 3) oral reading fluency
- 4) vocabulary, and
- 5) comprehension (listening and/or reading comprehension).

After Grade 1, phonemic awareness and phonics may be used as needed, with more emphasis shifting to the other key skills for most learners. Phonemic awareness and phonics should still be used for remediation for struggling pupils.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
The reading lesson does not include any of the five key reading skills.	The reading lesson includes 1-2 of the key reading skills.	The reading lesson includes 3-4 of the key reading skills.	The reading lesson includes all 5 of the key reading skills.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

PERFORMANCE AREA 4: TEACHING & LEARNING MATERIALS
Component #10: Use of Teaching & Learning Materials (TLMs) by Teacher to Teach Reading

BEST PRACTICE: The *use* of appropriate TLMs by the teacher (real objects, pictures, flash cards, story books, etc.) engages learners in the lesson and helps to explain concepts and build reading skills. Teachers use TLMs as directed in the scripted lesson plan or as appropriate to the lesson and the learners.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Teacher uses no TLMs. The chalkboard and chalk may be used.	Teacher uses at least one TLM that is related to the lesson and appropriate to the learners, in addition to chalk and chalkboard.	Teacher uses at least two TLMs that are related to the lesson and appropriate to the learners, in addition to chalk and chalkboard.	Teacher uses three or more TLMs that are related to the lesson and appropriate to the learners, in addition to chalk and chalkboard.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Component #11: Use of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) by Learners

BEST PRACTICE: The use of appropriate TLMs by learners enhances learning. To learn to read, learners must spend significant amounts of time reading. The teacher selects appropriate TLMs for learners to use (readers, supplementary readers, print materials, flash cards, sentence strips, games, etc.) These TLMs are related to the lesson and appropriate to the levels of the learners.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Learners use no TLMs. The chalkboard, exercise books and pencils may be used.	Learners use one TLM.	<i>Most</i> learners use two TLMs (individually, in pairs, small groups, or whole class).	<i>All</i> learners use two TLMs (individually, in pairs, small groups, or whole class).

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

PERFORMANCE AREA 5: ASSESSMENT, FEEDBACK AND USE OF RESULTS
Component #12: Monitoring Learners' Understanding During Lesson

BEST PRACTICE: The teacher continually assesses learners' understanding during the lesson (not only at the end of the lesson) by asking oral or written questions, observing learners as they work, checking their work, calling them to the board, listening to them read, etc.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Teacher does not assess learners' understanding during the lesson. Only choral responses are used <i>or</i> no individual assessment is used.	Teacher assesses understanding of <i>some</i> learners during the lesson.	Teacher assesses understanding of <i>most</i> learners during the lesson.	Teacher assesses understanding of <i>all</i> learners during the lesson in a variety of ways, e.g., asking questions, calling learners to the board to show their work, checking work, observing learners as they work.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Component #13: Feedback

BEST PRACTICE: During the lesson effective feedback helps learners to know if they are progressing. Feedback is provided to individual learners or learners working in groups to let them know if their work is adequate or inadequate. Feedback is given in a way that encourages learners to keep trying.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Teacher does not give feedback <i>or</i> feedback is harsh and does not encourage learners to try again.	Teacher gives feedback to whole class only. No feedback is given to groups or individuals. Feedback encourages learners.	Teacher gives <i>some</i> feedback to groups and/or individuals. Feedback encourages learners.	Teacher consistently gives feedback to groups and/or individuals. Feedback encourages learners.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Component #14: Differentiated Instruction

BEST PRACTICE: Based on the performance of learners, teachers provide remediation and enrichment for those learners who need more instruction, more practice, or different kinds of tasks. This differentiation of instruction may be on an individual basis, or learners with similar needs may be grouped for additional instruction or practice. Learners may also be assigned to work in pairs of mixed abilities. In order to determine individual needs, teachers must first monitor and assess learner understanding of the content and proficiency in the targeted reading skills.

Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
Teacher teaches the entire lesson at one level. No remediation or enrichment is provided, and no individual or group tasks are used during the lesson to address individual needs.	Most of the lesson is taught to the whole class, but teacher is aware of individual needs and gives some extra attention or help to <i>a few</i> learners who need it during the lesson.	Most of the lesson is taught to the whole class, but the teacher provides a remediation activity to those who need more help or practice.	Teacher provides remediation and enrichment activities for individuals or groups of learners during the lesson to address their needs.

EVIDENCE: [Explain and give examples to support your rating.]

Note-taking Form for the 5 Skills of Reading

Skill	What did the teacher do?	What did the pupils do?
Phonemic Awareness		
Phonics		
Oral Reading Fluency		
Vocabulary		
Comprehension (Listening, Reading)		

Annex 3: Semi-structured Interview Protocols

Target Group: Observed Teachers of Reading

District: _____	Date: _____
School: _____	No. _____
Standard: _____	
Teacher: _____	
HP _____	LP _____

Observed Teachers Semi-structured Interview Protocol (Retrospection and Attribution)

1. Complete the Background Information sheet with the teacher.
2. *(Retrospection) Give the teacher a blank copy of the Classroom Observation Instrument. Tell her that we will go through it together, and her task is to reflect on which box best describes her teaching before she started the Early Grade Reading Programme (Naitha, EGRA, Maziko a Kuwerenga). Briefly explain the Overview Sheet (Performance Areas and Related Components) and then guide the teacher through the instrument, briefly telling what each component is looking for, and ask the teacher to check one box for each component.*
3. There are 5 Performance Areas on the Classroom Observation Instrument. How much improvement do you think you've made in each of these areas?

1 = Significant improvement

2 = Some improvement

3 = Little improvement

_____ Time on Task for Reading

_____ Learning Environment for Reading

_____ Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills

_____ Teaching and Learning Materials

_____ Assessment, Feedback and Use of Results

4. On the items you rated “1” (significant improvement), what factors helped you to improve your teaching?

5. Can you tell me a story about a specific strategy or activity that really worked well for your pupils, that helped them to read better? OR about a pupil who really improved in reading?

6. On the items you rated “2” (some improvement) or “3” (little improvement), what factors inhibited your efforts to improve your teaching?

7. Tell me about the training you’ve received in the program.

What kind? *(If they don’t mention leadership and teaching reading, probe.)*

Who provided it?

Helpful? Why or why not?

What was most helpful?

8. What follow-up support did you receive?

(Probe about coaching if teachers don’t mention it. What support did head teachers give you? Other teachers? PEAs?)

What kind?

Who provided it?

How often?

Helpful? Why or why not?

What was most helpful?

9. What did the community do to support the teachers in this school to implement the new reading program, _____?

What did the SMC do?

What did parents do?

At school:

At home:

10. We talked earlier about factors that inhibited your improvement in teaching. What other factors in the school and community may lead to low reading performance of pupils? Explain.

Probe if teacher doesn't mention these. Check all that apply, and ask teacher to identify the top 3 and comment on those.

Here are some factors that teachers have identified as leading to low early grade reading achievement. Do any of these apply in your school and community?

____ Large classes *(Note what they consider a "large" class if they say this is a problem.)*

____ Inadequate classroom space

- ___ Understaffing
- ___ Inefficient head teachers
- ___ Teacher and pupil absenteeism
- ___ Insufficient time on task
- ___ Poor teaching methodologies
- ___ Poor use of teaching and learning materials
- ___ Lack of a reading culture (*Explain*)
- ___ Pupil hunger
- ___ Inadequate supervision
- ___ Others? (List)

11. Provide two suggestions for how the school can support teachers better in making improvements in teaching reading.

- 1.
- 2.

12. Provide one or two suggestions for ways the community and government (e.g., PEAs or others) can support teachers to teach reading better.

Community ---

- 1.
- 2.

Government ----

- 1.
- 2.

13. Do you have any questions for me?

Target Group: Head Teachers

District: _____	Date: _____
School: _____	No. _____
Head Teacher: _____	Sex: _____
HP _____	LP _____

Head Teacher Semi-structured Interview Protocol

1. Complete the School Demographic Profile with the head teacher.

2. Have you received leadership training as part of the Early Grade Reading Programme (Naitha, EGRA, Maziko a Kuwerenga)? If so, tell me about it.

What kind? *(If they don't mention leadership, probe.)*

Who provided it?

How often?

Was it helpful? Why or why not?

What was most helpful?

3. Have you received follow up support as part of the program? If so, what follow-up support have you received?
Type?

Who provided it?

How often?

Helpful? Why or why not?

What was most helpful?

4. *Give the head teacher a copy of the classroom observation instrument Overview Sheet (Performance Areas and Related Components) and briefly explain what each component includes.*

How much improvement do you think your reading teachers have made in each of these five Performance Areas?

1 = Significant improvement

2 = Some improvement

3 = Little improvement

_____ Time on Task for Reading

_____ Learning Environment for Reading

_____ Knowledge and Teaching of Reading Skills

_____ Teaching and Learning Materials

_____ Assessment, Feedback and Use of Results

5. *On the items you rated “1” (significant improvement), what factors helped teachers to improve their teaching of reading? (If the head teacher doesn’t mention it, ask if they coached teachers? Observed teachers?)*

6. Can you tell me a story about a teacher whose teaching has really improved a lot in the Early Grade Reading Programme (Naitha, EGRA, Maziko a Kuwerenga)?

7. On the items you rated “2” (some improvement) or “3” (little improvement), what factors inhibited their efforts to improve their teaching of reading?

8. *(Probe if head teacher didn't mention these. Check all that apply, and ask head teacher to select the top three and comment on those selected.)*

Here are some factors that teachers have identified as leading to low early grade reading achievement. Do any of these apply in your school and community?

Large classes

Inadequate classroom space

Understaffing

Inefficient head teachers

Teacher and pupil absenteeism

Insufficient time on task

Poor teaching methodologies

Poor use of teaching and learning materials

Lack of a reading culture

Pupil hunger

Inadequate supervision

Others? (List)

9. Provide two suggestions for how the school can support teachers better in making improvements in the classroom.

1.

2.

10. Provide one or two suggestions for ways the community and government can support teachers better.

Community ---

1.

2.

Government ----

1.

2.

11. Do you have any questions for me?

Target Group: Government (PEAS, District Officials, MOE)

District: _____ **Position:** _____

OR

Ministry: _____ **Position:** _____

Person(s) Interviewed: _____

Date: _____

Government Officials Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about the Early Grade Reading Programme (Naitha, EGRA, Maziko a Kuwerenga) in Malawi. (awareness)

2. What is your role in implementing the program, specifically? (involvement)

Ask PEAs:

Do you work with teachers at this school?

What do you do when you go to the school?

How often?

How many teachers do you work with?

What do you do? (*Observe? Give feedback? Demonstrations?*)

Do you work with the head teacher at this school?

What do you do?

How often?

3. Have you received any leadership training through the program? (training)
What kind?

Who provided it?

Was it helpful? Why or why not?

What was most helpful?

4. Did you receive follow up support to the leadership training? If so:
What kind?

Who provided it?

How often?

Was it helpful? Why or why not?

What was most helpful?

5. From your perspective, what factors contributed to the successes of the
Early Grade Reading Programme (Naitha, EGRA, Maziko a Kuwerenga)

1.

2.

6. What factors limited the success of the program?

1.

2.

7. What would help you to be a better coach?

8. *Probe if not mentioned.* Here are some factors that teachers have identified as leading to low early grade reading achievement. In your perspective, did any of these limit the success of the Early Grade Reading Programme (Naitha, EGRA, Maziko a Kuwerenga)? *Tally all that apply, choose the top 3 and ask for comments about what may be done:*

___ Large classes

___ Inadequate classroom space

___ Understaffing

___ Inefficient head teachers

___ Teacher and pupil absenteeism

___ Insufficient time on task

___ Poor teaching methodologies

___ Poor use of teaching and learning materials

___ Lack of a reading culture

___ Pupil hunger

___ Inadequate supervision

___ Others? (List)

9. Provide two suggestions for how government can support teachers better in making improvements in early grade reading instruction.

1.

2.

10. Do you have any questions for me?

Annex 4: Semi-structured Focus Group Discussion Protocols

Target Group: Community members

District: _____	Date: _____
School: _____	No. _____
SMC _____	Parents _____
No. in Focus Group: M _____ F _____	
HP _____	LP _____

Community Focus Group Protocol

Use with two separate groups of community members. Check the group whose responses are recorded here:

_____ SMC members (2-3 members)

_____ Parents of pupils in standards 1-4
(2-3 members of the Mother's Club, PTA or community---no SMC)

1. Are you aware of the Early Grade Reading Programme (Naitha, EGRA, Maziko a Kuwerenga) in Malawi? Yes _____ No _____

Can you tell me about it? (awareness)

2. Have you received any training or orientation through the Early Grade Reading Programme (Naitha, EGRA, Maziko a Kuwerenga)?

Yes _____ No _____ (training/orientation)

Tell me about it.

-
3. Have you ever visited or observed a reading class? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, what were your impressions? (visitation) If not, why not?
4. Do you think reading has improved at your school over the past year?
Yes ___ No ___
Why or why not?

Can you share examples?
5. What is the SMC doing to support the literacy program? OR What are parents' organizations or community members doing to support the teaching of reading? (support)
6. What are parents at this school doing to help their children learn to read:

At school?

At home?
7. What helped teachers to implement the reading program? What helped them to teach pupils to learn to read better?
8. What factors inhibited teachers' efforts to implement the program? What inhibited their efforts to teach pupils to learn to read better?

Probe if community members don't mention these:

Here are some factors that have been identified as leading to low early grade reading achievement. Do any of these apply in your school and community? Tell me if these apply to your school and community. *Tally all that apply and then choose the top 3 and ask participants to comment about what may be done:*

___ Large classes

- Inadequate classroom space
- Understaffing
- Inefficient head teachers
- Teacher and pupil absenteeism
- Insufficient time on task
- Poor teaching methodologies
- Poor use of teaching and learning materials
- Lack of a reading culture
- Pupil hunger
- Inadequate supervision
- Others? (List and tell what can be done)

9. (SMC only) Does your school produce a *School Report Card*? (*Be sure they don't confuse this with pupils' report cards.*) Yes _____ No _____

Do they include information on reading achievement of pupils? Yes _____ No _____

Is this information shared with the community? Yes _____ No _____ How?

10. Provide one or two suggestions for ways the school, community and government can support teachers better.

School---

1.

2.

Community----

1.

2.

Government---

1.

2.

11. Do you have any questions for me?

Target Group: Pupils

District: _____	Date: _____
School: _____	No. _____
Standard: _____	#Girls: _____ #Boys: _____
HP _____	LP _____

Pupils' Focus Group Protocol

Interviewer selects two groups of pupils for separate focus groups. Check the group whose responses are recorded here.

_____ Standard 4: 2 boys and 2 girls

Icebreakers - What are your names? (Do not record)

What do you like best about school?

1. Are you learning to read in school? Tell me about your reading class...

a. What do you do in reading class? To learn to read?

b. What does the teacher do? (*Does she read aloud? Read stories?...*)

2. Do you like to read? Yes _____ No _____ (record number of responses)

a. If yes, what do you read?

b. If no, why not?

c. Are you a good reader? Yes _____ No _____ Don't know _____

3. Do you read at home? Yes _____ No _____

a. What do you read at home?

b. Do you take books home to read? How often?

c. Who reads with you, or helps you?

c. Does anyone read *to* you? Yes _____ No _____

Who?

4. How is your attendance at school?

a. Do you come to school:

Every day? _____

Almost every day? _____

Sometimes? _____

Most of the time I stay home _____

d. Do you come to school on time? Yes _____ No _____ Why not?

5. Does your teacher come to school:

Every day? _____

Almost every day? _____

If no...

What happens when your teacher doesn't come to school? What does the class do? Does this happen a lot?

6. Do you have any questions for me?

Target Group: Non-observed Teachers of Reading**District:** _____ **Date:** _____**School:** _____ **No.** _____**Standard:** _____**Teacher:** _____**HP** _____ **LP** _____**Non-observed Teachers Focus Group Protocol**

1. Ask teachers to complete the Background Information Sheet for teachers.
2. Tell me about the training you've received for the Early Grade Reading Programme (Naitha, EGRA, Maziko a Kuwerenga).

What kind? *(If they don't mention leadership and teaching reading, probe.)*

Who provided it?

Was it helpful? Why or why not?

What was most helpful?

3. What strategies or activities have you been able to use in your classroom?

4. Can you tell me a story about a specific strategy or activity that really worked well for your pupils, that helped them to learn to read better? OR about a pupil who really improved in reading?

5. After the training, what follow-up support did you receive?
(Probe about coaching if teachers don't mention it. What support did head teachers give you? Other teachers? PEAs?)

What kind?

Who provided it?

How often?

Helpful? Why or why not?

What was most helpful?

6. What factors helped you to improve your teaching?

7. What factors inhibited your efforts to improve in teaching?

8. What did the community do to support the teachers in this school to implement the new reading program, _____?

What did the SMC do?

What did parents do?

At school:

At home:

9. What other factors in the school and community may lead to low reading performance of pupils? Explain.

Probe if teacher doesn't mention these. Check all that apply, and ask teacher to comment on the top three of those checked.

Here are some factors that teachers have identified as leading to low early grade reading achievement. Do any of these apply in your school and community?

___ Large classes (*Note what they consider a "large" class if they say this is a problem.*)

___ Inadequate classroom space

___ Understaffing

___ Inefficient head teachers

___ Teacher and pupil absenteeism

___ Insufficient time on task

___ Poor teaching methodologies

___ Poor use of teaching and learning materials

___ Lack of a reading culture (*Explain*)

___ Pupil hunger

___ Inadequate supervision

___ Others? (List)

10. How can the school support teachers better in making improvements in the classroom? Provide suggestions:

1.

2.

11. Provide one or two suggestions for ways the community and government (e.g., PEAs and others) can support teachers better in making improvements in the classroom.

Community ---

1.

2.

Government ----

1.

2.

Annex 5: Overall Summary Data for 14 Components of Class Observation
Overall Summary Data for 14 Components / 5 Performance Areas by Percent of Teachers*

Component	Not Yet Started	Getting Started	Making Progress	Showing Results
PA1: Time on Task for Reading				
1- Time for Teaching & Learning to Read	5	14	67	14
2 – Use of Class Time	10	24	33	33
3 – Learner Engagement	0	33	43	24
Sub-total PA1	5	24	48	24
PA2: Learning Environment for Reading				
4 – Arrangement of Learners	43	24	33	0
5 – Encouragement of Learners	5	14	57	24
6 – Gender Sensitivity	10	5	86	0
7 – Learner Interaction	71	10	14	5
Sub-total PA2	32	13	48	7
PA3: Knowledge & Teaching of Reading Skills				
8 – Knowledge of the Reading Programme Skills	0	19	57	24
9 – Teaching of the Five Key Reading Skills	0	29	57	14
Sub-total PA3	0	24	24	19
PA4: Teaching & Learning Materials				
10 – Use of Teaching & Learning Materials by Teachers	19	33	33	14
11 – Use of Teaching & Learning Materials by Learners	48	43	5	5
Sub-total PA4	33	38	19	10
PA5: Assessment, Feedback & Use of Results				
12 – Monitoring Learners' Understanding During the Lesson	5	24	67	5
13 - Feedback	10	29	62	0
14 – Differentiated Instruction	90	10	0	0
Sub-total PA5	35	21	27	1

Total	66	65	129	34
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PA=Performance Area

*These ratings represent a continuum from the absence of the skill (“Not Yet Started”) to ideal implementation (“Showing Results.”) Teachers at the level of “Not Yet Started” and “Getting Started” are considered to need improvement, whereas teachers at the “Making Progress” stage are considered to be doing well. Teachers rated as “Showing Results” have demonstrated mastery of the skill.

Annex 6: Summary Data for High/Low Performing Schools on 14 Components in 5 Performance Areas, by Percent of Teachers

Performance Area 1: Time on Task for Reading					
		NYS	GS	MP	SR
1 - Time for Teaching & Learning to Read	High	0	18	73	9
	Low	10	10	60	20
2 - Use of Class Time	High	0	0	55	45
	Low	20	50	10	20
3 - Learner Engagement	High	0	9	55	36
	Low	0	60	30	10
Sub-total for PA1	H/L	0 / 10	9 / 40	61 / 33	30 / 17
Performance Area 2: Learning Environment for Reading					
		NYS	GS	MP	SR
4 - Arrangement of Learners	High	36	27	36	0
	Low	50	20	30	0
5 - Encouragement of Learners	High	0	0	55	45
	Low	10	30	60	0
6 - Gender Sensitivity	High	9	0	91	0
	Low	10	10	80	0
7 – Learner Interaction	High	55	18	18	9
	Low	90	0	10	0
Sub-total for PA2	H/L	25 / 40	11 / 15	50 / 45	14 / 0
Performance Area 3: Knowledge & Teaching of Reading Skills					
		NYS	GS	MP	SR
8 – Knowledge of the Reading Program Skills	High	0	0	64	36
	Low	0	40	50	10
9 – Teaching the Five Key Reading Skills	High	0	9	64	27
	Low	0	50	50	0
Sub-total for PA3	H/L	0 / 0	5 / 45	64 / 50	32 / 5
Performance Area 4: Teaching & Learning Materials					
		NYS	GS	MP	SR
10 – Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Teacher	High	0	36	45	18
	Low	40	30	20	0
11 – Use of Teaching and Learning Materials by Learners	High	55	45	0	0
	Low	40	40	10	10
Sub-total for PA4	H/L	27 / 40	41 / 35	23 / 15	9 / 5
Performance Area 5: Assessment, Feedback & Use of Results					
		NYS	GS	MP	SR
12 – Monitoring Learners' Understanding	High	0	18	73	9

During the Lesson	Low	10	30	60	0
13 - Feedback	High	0	27	73	0
	Low	20	30	50	0
14 – Differentiated Instruction	High	91	9	0	0
	Low	90	10	0	0
Sub-total for PA5	H/L	30 / 40	18 / 23	48 / 37	3 / 0
TOTAL	H/L	18 / 28	16 / 29	50 / 37	17 / 6

NYS=Not Yet Started, GS=Getting Started, MP=Making Progress, SR=Showing Results,
H=High Performing Schools, L=Low Performing Schools

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