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UNIVERSITY 0F THE WITATERSRAND –JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Education Decentralisation in Malawi: Current Trends and Developments.

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF EDUCATION

(Education Policy, Planning and Management)

By

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EDUCATION DECENTRALISATION IN MALAWI: CURRENT TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS.

ABSTRACT

The government of Malawi has embarked on a decentralisation program, whose primary objective is to improve service delivery. The program is implemented by transferring responsibility and authority from central office to the district assemblies. The study aimed at assessing the implementation situation of education decentralisation and its effects on the district education office operations and the primary school support. The study uses qualitative research method and undertook a case study of two districts. Data was collected by using in-depth individual interviews and document analysis. The results show that decentralisation is a complex phenomenon with problems at all stages from design to implementation. On the one hand the government appears committed to transferring responsibilities and authority gradually to district assembly level while on the other hand it is not prepared to compensate for the disparities existing in the districts by increasing resources. There is an acute shortage of material and human resources in terms of numbers as well as competency levels. This has affected the pace and smooth implementation of decentralisation. Because decentralisation is not a 'once and for all' act but a complex process, it is recommended to intensify advocacy, capacity building and support with relevant resources at all levels.

DECLARATION

I Noel Drake Kufaine declare that *EDUCATION DECENTRALISATION IN MALAWI: CURRENT TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS* is my work. It has never been submitted for a degree or examination before in this, or any other University. Sources in this study have been fully indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed_____

Date_____

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My heartfelt gratitude should go to the following persons who contributed to the successful completion of this work.

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The almighty God for taking care of me and sustaining my health to the realisation of this dream.

ACRONYMS

DAPP	Development Aid from People to People
DEM	District Educational Manager
DFID	Department for International Development
DOE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
GOM	Government of Malawi
HT	Head Teacher
LGA	Local Government Act
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non- Governmental Organisation
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
PIF	Policy Investment Framework
TA	Traditional Authority
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNESCO	United Nation Education Scientific and Culture Organisation
WFP	World Food Program

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EDUCATION DECENTRALISATION IN MALAWI: CURRENT TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a general overview of this study on the decentralisation of primary education to districts in Malawi in 1998. It outlines the aim of the study which examines the degree of success and efficacy of administrative and fiscal education decentralisation to districts. It then explains why it is an important research undertaking and concludes with an overview of the study which serves as a summary of the different chapters of the study.

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Government of Malawi has embarked on a decentralisation program through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (Local Government Act, 1998: 1). The primary objectives of the program are to improve service delivery, enhance participatory democracy and good governance as reported below:

> ‘‘Decentralisation will be the major driving force in strengthening efficiency and accountability of resources and results. Basic education will be made accountable to local level authorities with development and operational responsibilities transferred from central government to districts.’’ (Government of Malawi, 2002: 52)

In Malawi, decentralisation involves central government departments transferring responsibilities and authorities to the district assembly through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The district assembly has two structures: the political structure which comprises the elected ward councilors chaired by the mayor and the administrative structure which comprises the departmental representatives chaired by the district commissioner.

The main functions of the assembly, according to Local Government Act (1998: 4), are the promotion of democracy and citizen participation in development, the passing of by-laws for good governance and providing services like education, health services, environmental protection, road construction and maintenance and community amenities. The political wing of the assembly works through committees in liaison with the departmental heads in the district.

Departments which are decentralised are the department of health and population, department of education, science and technology, department of trade and private sector development, department of water and irrigation, department of agriculture, department of gender, child welfare and community services and department of natural resources and environmental affairs (Kashoti, 2007: 2). There are reports that the department of education, science and technology and the department of gender, child welfare and community services are making progress in the devolution to district assemblies (Kashoti, 2007: 2). However, education decentralisation has been making slow progress due to barriers such as resource and capacity constraints, and more importantly due to resistance to change, as reported by Rose (2005: 164)

The district education office works in liaison with the education committee of the district assembly and is answerable to the district commissioner, chief executive of district assembly and therefore accountable to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development as well as to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. On school development and district education office expenditures the district education manager is accountable to the district assembly and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. On education teaching and learning activities the district education manager is accountable to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

The education system in Malawi is managed through an education central office which has six education divisional offices which are responsible for the running of secondary education, thirty-three education district offices, which are responsible for running primary school education in the district, three-hundred and seventeen education zones, which are responsible for primary school monitoring and supervision and 5,231 schools, which are responsible for teaching and learning.

The district education office has a district education manager, who serves as overall district education administrator, a district education desk officer who is responsible for the technical administrative issues in the district education office. There are three sub-divisions in the district education office: human resources with an officer responsible for personnel administration, finance with a principal accountant responsible for finance and senior education advisor responsible for the support, monitoring and supervision of education in schools. Under the district education office, there are education zones which are headed by a primary education advisor and primary schools headed by a head teacher.

The district education office, according to the Local Government Act (1998: 4), is funded by government through a budgeted monthly subvention, and receives an allocation from the district assembly which is empowered by the Local Government Act (1998: 4), to levy and collect revenues through property rates, ground rent, fees and license, commercial undertaking and service charges.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With the advent of free primary education in 1994 and the education decentralisation in 1998, the government has argued that: ‘‘Decentralisation will be the major driving force in strengthening efficiency and accountability of resources and results” (GoM 2002: 52). Thus, the Department of Education assumes that decentralisation of education management and administration can transform districts into sites of efficient service delivery:

1.3 RATIONALE

Since the advent of decentralisation in general and educational decentralisation in particular, the situation and effects of education decentralisation on education service delivery at the district level has not been sufficiently researched. This study is important because the decentralisation policy was adopted by Malawi in 1998 and there is research evidence of some problems and inefficiencies. Based on this understanding, this study endeavors to go deeper and contribute to a further investigation of the issues and factors undermining and/or assisting the process of education decentralisation and its benefits for the Malawian education system. The findings from this study will hopefully be useful for policy makers and district education offices in their efforts to meet the decentralisation challenges experienced at district level and the way forward.

1.4 STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study aims to shed light on the progress of the implementation of the education decentralization policy which is expected to contribute to the alleviation of some of the education problems in Malawi. According to the Malawian government: ‘‘Decentralization will be the major driving force in strengthening efficiency and accountability of resources and results” (GoM 2002: 52).

This study focuses on the district education office and its operations. It examines the situation and the effects of education decentralisation and in particular its administrative and fiscal operations. Administrative decentralisation refers to the delegation of roles and responsibilities to lower levels of the administration in response to demands for better primary education service delivery in the district. Fiscal decentralisation refers to the lower administrative level, in this case the district education office, assuming financial authorities in education administration to improve education delivery in the district.

The success and efficacy of administrative and fiscal decentralisation can be measured differently according to different perspectives (see next chapter). But key to all is whether decentralisation has made the provision and delivery of education services and goods more efficient for the education system.

The study intends to assess the situation under which the district education office functions and the extent to which it has affected the operations of other structures. In order to unpack this big issue, the following questions will be asked:

a. Why and what powers and authority were transferred to the district education office?
b. How does the district education office understand the decentralisation effort and its different lines of accountability?
c. How does the district education office assume its administrative authority and financial responsibility in terms of decision-making and operations?
d. What are the effects and situation of education decentralisation on district education office operations and the support to schools?

The first question helps to establish how the origin, aim and form of education decentralisation are perceived. This information is useful in terms of understanding the degree of power and authority devolved. It is imperative to understand what exactly is transferred and how meaningful the form and authority is. The information is also useful in terms of assessing the relationship between the district education office and district assembly as well as within and between departmental district offices, education zones and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

The second question helps to understand the perspectives of the district education office, on its delegated roles and responsibilities.

The third question helps to assess the way the district education office assumes its authority and responsibility over decision making, capacity building, and resources management.

The fourth question helps to understand the situation and the effects of education decentralisation on district education office operations and school support.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY.

This study is structured in the following manner.

Chapter One

Chapter one is the introductory chapter which deals with the general overview of this study on education decentralisation to districts in Malawi. It outlines the study protocol and help to capture the investigative process. The outline locates the research, research purpose and explains the importance of the undertaking.

Chapter Two

This chapter on the literature review, examines decentralisation in general and education decentralisation in particular. It presents various debates around decentralisation in order to develop a theoretical framework to analyse education decentralisation to districts in Malawi. Various positions are presented to show how the understanding of decentralisation has shifted over the years.

Chapter Three.

This chapter on the research methodology explains the methodological approach and the way this research was conducted. The interpretive paradigm and qualitative research method is discussed as well as the qualitative data gathering methods and its instruments. This is done by referring to the research method literature to justify the choices made.

Chapter Four.

Chapter four, on the implementation of decentralisation and its impact on districts, deals with the presentation and analysis of the different data collected from the various stakeholders. The viewpoints of the different stakeholders are presented according to their workplace, and are also analysed by using the categories/themes identified in the literature review.

Chapter Five

Chapter five on the evaluation of the implementation of district decentralisation in two districts, deals with an evaluation of the implementation and impact of decentralisation in two districts. A comparison of implementation and the challenges of decentralisation between two districts is made on the basis of the data collected on the themes derived from our theoretical framework. The role of district education office is particularly emphasized as it is the pivot of education decentralisation in Malawi. The role and effectiveness of its leadership is also discussed.

Chapter Six

Chapter six concludes with the researcher's interpretation of the findings. This is done with reference to the relevant literature. Suggestions are then put forward and concluding remarks are made.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter looks at the literature of decentralisation in general and education decentralisation in particular. It presents a theoretical framework within which decentralisation is discussed. Various theoretical positions are presented to show how decentralisation understanding has continued to shift over the years.

In order to understand decentralisation in general and education decentralisation in particular, it is important to review decentralisation theories as well as empirical research undertaken on educational decentralisation in various countries including Malawi. The literature review also assists in the shaping of the research design and the development of conceptual framework which is used in framing the study and analysing its data and findings.

The following structure is used for the literature review in order to understand the situation and effects of decentralisation on the operations of the district education office and the extent to which these have affected primary education delivery in the districts.

- Forms and types of decentralisation.
- Origin of and rationale for decentralisation.
- Advantages and disadvantages of decentralisation.
- Pre-conditions for decentralisation.
- Roles and limitations of districts

These debates will then assist with the conceptual framework for this study.

2.2 FORMS AND TYPES OF DECENTRALISATION.

There is need for a comprehensive understanding of the context in which decentralisation initiatives are undertaken, their forms and their major outcomes. This is important as it provides a basis for identifying viable strategies that ensure effective decentralisation and sustainable local development (Hussein, 2004: 107).

There seems to be a general agreement by different authors that decentralisation is a vague, slippery and complex concept to define because, as Bray (1985: 184) argues, decentralisation covers a wide range of processes and structures. But while it is appreciated that decentralisation is a complex process, different authors (Work, 2002: 5; Bray 1985: 185; Lane and Murray, 1985: 163; McGinn and Welsh 1999: 17), have tried to define it. Work (2002: 5) defines decentralisation as the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to lower levels of government. This definition emanates from the understanding that decentralisation has a development agenda alongside the renewed global emphasis on governance and human development. Bray (1985: 185) defines decentralisation as the transfer of decision making powers from higher levels in the official hierarchy to lower ones, because he looks at decentralisation as a change in the administrative system. Lane and Murray (1985: 163) see decentralisation as re-assigning responsibility and corresponding decision authority for specific functions from higher to lower levels of government and organizational units and McGinn and Welsh (1999: 17) define decentralisation as a shift in the location of those who govern, a transfer of authority from those in one location or level of organisation to those in another level. Lane and Murray (1985: 163) and McGinn and Welsh (1999: 17) argue that decentralisation is a continuation of what was being done by somebody at a higher level, but now done by somebody at a lower level. Thus, the basic definition of decentralisation may be the transfer of decision making authority, responsibility and tasks from the higher to a lower organizational level.

The diversity of the definition on decentralisation emanates from the complexity of the variables which are used to define this phenomenon. Education decentralisation has many facets because it deals with changes in the way school systems go about making policies, generating revenue, spending funds, training teachers, designing curricula and managing local schools (Dyer and Rose 2005: 105). According to Dyer and Rose (2005: 106); Davies et al (2003: 143) and Chisinga (2005: 531), stakeholders rarely make distinctions between different types of decentralisation and do not often appreciate the consequences associated with each type. It is important therefore to clarify the type of authority and responsibility to be shifted as well as how it is to be done.

Naidoo (2003: 3) points out that decentralisation takes many forms, depending on the level of government to which decisions are devolved and the kind of decisions moved to these other levels of government and the rationale behind it. Chimombo (2005: 3) says education decentralisation is complex because it has different meanings and refers to different types and reforms of decentralised education administration, management and government system with different policy aims and strategies.

Different forms have different characteristics, policy implications and different conditions of success. Decentralisation can be political, administrative and fiscal. Political decentralisation, as described by Work (2002: 6) and Lauglo (1995: 9), refers to the devolution of political power and authority to sub-national levels of government, usually by election. Devolution, as defined by Dyer and Rose (2005: 106), refers to power formally held at sub-national level, where local decision makers do not need to seek higher level approval for their action.

According to Work (2002: 6) and Lauglo (1995: 9), administrative decentralisation refers to the transfer of decision making authority, resources and responsibilities for the delivery of selected number of public services from central government to other levels of government agencies. Dyer and Rose (2005: 106) describe

deconcentration and delegation of authority, as involving the shifting of management responsibilities from the center to the lower level, but the center still retains the overall control of powers. Delegation involves leaving a degree of decision making to the lower level but the delegated system still rests on the central authority and the power can be withdrawn (Dyer and Rose 2005: 106). Fiscal decentralisation refers to authority over budget and resource allocated to the local levels of government (Work 2002: 6).

2.3. ORIGIN AND RATIONALE FOR DECENTRALISATION

Research in decentralisation has shown that factors which push for decentralisation in most countries are: external pressure by international agencies and internal political expediency in the national context (De Grauwe, et al. 2005: 2; Davies et al 2003: 140). As pointed out by Work (2002: 5), the western world sees decentralisation as an alternative to inefficient centralised public services which will be more cost effective. Post communist countries take decentralisation as a natural step in the shift to market economy and democracy. But many developing countries decentralise to counter economic managerial deficiencies and ineffective central governance. Some Latin American countries decentralised as a result of political pressure to democratise. This means, apart from having different meanings, the phenomenon of decentralisation shows variations in rationales and purposes attributed to the concept in different parts of the world. The motives at institutional levels include: increasing efficiency and accountability, or increasing democratisation and community participation, mobilising resources, or becoming more responsive to local needs (Work 2002: 5).

Decentralised education functions differ according to countries. They include, organisation of instruction (this involves text books, teaching methods, curricula and schedule), personnel management (which involves hiring and firing, paying, assigning, teaching responsibilities and training) planning and structures (which

involves examination development, school opening and closing and course content) and resource management (which involves expenditure, budget allocation and school improvement plan) (Dyer and Rose 2005: 105; Naidoo, 2003: 4).

The origin of decentralisation is determined by the context in which it takes place. This means that the content of decentralisation policies and their interaction with broader political and economical systems determines its situation (Bray 1985: 187; Tordoff 1994: 556; Work 2002: 8). The consolidation and balance of power, the strengthening of regions and the reduction of central government powers are some of the factors which influence the establishment of decentralisation in different countries (Fiske, 1996: 12). There are reports that decentralisation is symbolic and that there is little evidence to support the claim that decentralisation genuinely promotes democracy (Fiske, 1996: 12; Dyer and Rose 2005: 107). Weiler (1990: 440) argues that decentralisation should be seen as an instrument of conflict management, which means that central governments decentralise to avoid tension.

The rationale behind education decentralisation, according to Gershberg and Winkler (2003: 1) is to improve efficiency, effectiveness and democracy. Naidoo (2003: 3) adds that UNESCO sees decentralisation as a hopeful trend in the management and governance of the education system. The literature (Rose, 2005: 155; Gershberg and Winkler, 2003: 1; Herbert, et al, 2000: 155) argues that decentralisation is intended to bring numerous improvements, and it is believed that decentralisation can contribute to further democratisation, more efficient public administration, more effective development, as well as good governance.

Herbert, et al (2000: 165) and Dyer and Rose (2005: 107) argue that there is not sufficient evidence to support the point that decentralisation improves education efficiency. Naidoo (2003: 3) says decentralisation just revolves around attempts

to restructure centralised education bureaucracy and create devolved systems with different administrative levels, varying levels of institutional autonomy and forms of school based management.

Educational decentralisation has become increasingly apparent in accompanying the drive for education for all. The intention is to improve education access and equity through education decentralisation to promote greater education autonomy. Research has shown that reforms in education need to be accompanied by strategies to strengthen capacities and leadership and provide support to schools through professional development (McGinn and Welsh, 1999: 24 and Naidoo, 2003: 15).

But according to Work (2002: 8), the implementation of decentralisation of different types and degrees across the countries shows how difficult it is to compare decentralisation. In Malawi, according to the local government act (1998: 52), the primary objectives of administrative decentralisation are to improve service delivery, through sound decision making and transparent resource utilisation, as well as enhance participatory democracy and good governance (Hussein, 2004: 113; Chisinga, 2005: 531 and Rose, 2005: 156).

2.4 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DECENTRALISATION

The well known benefits of administrative decentralisation is the improved responsiveness to local conditions by placing decision making with those closest to the work (Dyer and Rose, 2005: 106; Bray and Mukundan, 2003: 5; Gershberg and Winkler, 2003: 1; Work, 2002: 5; Herbert et al 2000: 156; Tordoff, 1994: 556). This improves accountability of public services because people can scrutinize the local level more closely than they can with the central government. It is also argued that services are delivered more speedily than the centralised administration because decentralisation reduces the lengthy procedures for decision making and implementation. In this case, the services also become

more responsive to and tailored for different needs to suit different localities. The process has also individual advantages like reducing the stress and burdens of senior managers, while empowering local managers and encouraging them to be more innovative and motivated. It is pointed out that subordinates may have better knowledge of local conditions affecting their areas of work and this will assist them to make well informed judgments on the choice of the development required. At the same time, the devolution of responsibility enables junior managers to be groomed to take over higher responsibilities. They acquire experience of decision making when carrying out delegated tasks. There is also greater flexibility and quick response to changes.

The limitation of administrative decentralisation pointed out by some authors (De Grauwe, et al. 2005: 3; and Dyer and Rose 2005: 105) is the failure to adhere to common standards by different localities, because of the lack of coordination and control of activities. This is caused by different factors which include capacity of personnel and resources of different local governments (De Grauwe, et al. 2005: 3; Dyer and Rose 2005: 107; Naidoo, 2003: 2). Work (2002: 18) acknowledges that the decentralisation process is a challenging and complex process that requires patience and dedication on the part of stakeholders**.**

2.5 PRE-CONDITIONS FOR DECENTRALISATION

The literature highlights the importance of acknowledging that most of the decentralisation initiatives experience constraints. In so doing the decisions on the form and degree of decentralisation should consider the challenges in the decentralisation as a process. The most important pre-conditions for successful implementation of decentralisation, according to literature (Tordoff, 1994: 556; Fullan, 2005: 175; Geo-Jaja, 2006: 146; Dyer and Rose, 2005: 109; Falleti,1999: 327), are district staff and leadership capacity, clear lines of accountability, commitment by government to transfer adequate resources to districts, stable political system and the sequence of form of decentralisation to be implemented.

According to Tordoff (1994: 556), decentralisation to districts means the tasks which were performed at the central office will be done by staff at district level which will need qualified personnel to be deployed. The district capacity, and its leadership capacity in particular, is critical in developing and sustaining those district level conditions believed essential for successful implementation of decentralisation (Spillane, 2003: 343). Leadership in this context is understood to be the exercise of authority and the making of decisions, as well as directing and coordinating tasks relevant to the institutional goals. As pointed by Davidoff and Lazarus (2002: 37), in the school context, leaders have an important role to play in drawing people together and motivating them to take leaps into often risky futures. This is particularly important in the unstable context of decentralisation currently being experienced, where this aspect of leadership can assist in transcending the many fears and anxieties common in such situations. According to Spillane and Thompson (1997: 187), the human capital of the district is vital and training is needed for staff to develop a greater sense of responsibility, trust and participation. This can, in turn, promote social capital which, according to Spillane and Thompson (1997: 187), is the creation of social links within and outside the district, together with the norms and trust to support open communication via these links. The success of the implementation of decentralisation in this sense depends on strong leadership and human and social capacity at the district level.

Yet in most district assemblies in Malawi, a shortage of qualified officials is often experienced, due to inadequate capacity building training programmes, inadequate qualifications among serving members in financial management and/or numerous vacant positions (UNDP 2000). There is also need to ensure that positions in the district assemblies are commensurate with the responsibilities devolved to them (Hussein 2004: 129).

Increased public spending is, according to Geo-Jaja (2006: 146), also important for successful implementation of decentralisation because decentralisation increases the costs and expenses of districts which have higher demands made on them regarding staffing, coordination and capacity support. This means that the government or district revenue must increase and that the macroeconomics fundamentals are stable. As pointed by de Grauwe, et al (2005: 9), lack of resources beyond the basic, hinders districts from planning strategically, taking initiatives and focus the effort where most needed. It has been reported by Ayee, (1997: 53) that financial constraints in developing countries have meant that most decentralisations are often *de facto* financial decentralisations. As a result, districts operate in tight budget lines and district managers have little autonomy in using resources as these are very insufficient. Too often, the financial support given to district does not take into account the characteristics and needs of districts. This situation is counterproductive because it makes district managers frustrated and inefficient.

The importance of a stable government committed to transfer authority and resources to district level is also important, according to Dyer and Rose (2005: 109), because it will enable districts to assume the devolved responsibilities. This is because the problems during implementation are exacerbated when transfer of responsibility results in conflict between actors, particularly where there is fear of loss of power and control. If decentralisation involves only the shifting of functions from central office to district while everything else remains unchanged, successful implementation of decentralisation is unlikely to be achieved.

Another precondition, according to Falleti (1999: 327), is that the degree of change depends also on the sequence in the forms of decentralisation which, he argues, should be political first, then fiscal and lastly administrative. Falleti (1999: 328) argues that the sequence of having political authority first enables the implementation of other forms of decentralisation to be bargained by using the devolved political powers. But the trend from developing countries has been

administrative decentralisation first but the political and fiscal dimensions have rarely been fully decentralised. Falleti (1999: 343) argues that decentralisation without political and fiscal decentralisation has slim chances of being successful. This is why decentralisation favours countries with high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and relatively low income disparity as these make possible the promotion of fiscal decentralisation. Those countries with low (GDP) and high income disparities which decentralise do not find fiscal decentralisation obvious.

Malawi appears to have combined a degree of administrative and political decentralisation without much fiscal decentralisation. It will therefore be important to assess the decentralisation sequence in Malawi and its effect on district education office operations.

All this means that to have a clear rationale is one thing, but to have goals fulfilled is another because there are many factors to take into account. Work (2002: 15) argues that decentralisation is not a 'one size fit all' and factors mentioned above have an influence on the design, execution and results of implementing a decentralisation reform.

2.6 DISTRICTS: ROLES AND LIMITATIONS

It is the district office which has the obligation to make sure things function properly between headquarters and schools. Anderson (2003: 4) points out that the district plays a role in interpreting and mediating schools' response to state policy. It has also been pointed by Massell (2000: 2) that districts act as a gatekeeper for state policy and school requests as they have to relay the instructions from education head office to schools as well as coordinate and respond to various schools' needs.

Apart from mediating state policy at schools, the district roles are: setting and communicating a vision for education in the district, building capacity of schools,

teachers and learners, assisting schools with monitoring and reflection on their progress as well as facilitating inter-school sharing (Anderson 2003: 3, Massell 2000: 2, Ayee 1997: 39, Spillane and Thompson, 1997: 199).

The district office is the pivot for development in the district; it has the role to contribute vision and guidance to schools (Anderson 2003: 3). This is achieved by planning, financing and infrastructure development, which is done by adapting existing standards and operating procedures (Ayee, 1997: 38).

Massell (2000: 2) points out that capacity building is one of the most important roles of the district office. This is achieved by offering menu of workshops or providing resources to staff to pursue professional development. There should also be additional resources and capacity building targeted for poor performing schools. According to Anderson (2003: 13), this district capacity building role should target teachers, learners and schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

However, despite the introduction of decentralisation and institutional reforms, De Grauwe, et al (2005: 3) argue that the performance of local districts has not been responsive due to several challenges which they cannot address effectively such as: building capacity for reform, bypass of projects to schools, to be answerable to two ministries, issues of finance, accommodation, and a legal basis for operation.

Anderson (2003: 7) points out that districts are also challenged to respond to disparities within themselves. There are high expectations from communities, according to Ayee, (1997: 53) that the district cannot easily achieve. Issues such as unsatisfactory achievements, especially for minority groups, suggest that strong disparities in capacity of teaching staff exist in schools serving different student population. These disparities mean that many learners suffer from poor instructional coherence within and across schools in the district. The capacity of

leadership is also a challenge for successfully meeting new expectations in high accountable context.

However the district still remains the pivot for all activities happening within it, according to Massell (2000: 6). Lack of coordination between central office leadership and district leadership creates tensions which often lead to the central office opting to operate directly with schools, bypassing the district. This usually happens when the central office is threatened with a loss of power and control. Donors also sometimes would want to go straight to schools, bypassing the district office (Ayee 1997: 52). This situation undermines the district leadership and its control on how schools operate and perform goals set by state, whether or not they have the necessary capacity to do so.

The new responsibilities devolved to the district mean additional district costs and this has led to the district inability to meet all the demands within it. This has been exacerbated by poor revenue collection capacities in districts, especially those with poor socio-economic status. In this case, decentralisation can reinforce existing district inequalities, in that districts with financially better-off localities such as cities and towns have prospered while districts with poor rural areas have lagged behind (Dyer and Rose 2005: 108).

The decentralisation experience has shown that districts account to two ministries, the mother Ministry (like Ministry of Education Science and Technology) as well as the Ministry of local government and rural development. This situation according to Ayee (1997: 39) leads to district offices having divided loyalty.

District decentralisation can suffer from a lack of legal basis for its operation, which, according to Onyach-Olaa (2003: 111), threatens the success of the operation. This is the case in Malawi where guidelines on decentralisation

operation are only available up to the district level and not below. There are also no elected councilors to make the by-laws in the district assembly.

The way forward to counter the challenges outlined above appears difficult but possible. According to Onyach-Olaa (2003: 105), there is need for a committed political leadership. This is possible in the district because decentralisation has given districts some political power, through the elected councilors who could help to establish a stable political leadership in the district. It is the same political power which could respond to the issue of incomplete legal framework in the district. The elected councilors are mandated to formulate by-laws in the assembly.

One way to enhance district capacity, according to Spillane and Thompson (1997: 199), is through social capital or the networking and partnering with government, Non-governmental organisations, and donors under the guidance of the local district leadership.

Most decentralisation initiatives in developing countries are pursued in the context of a centralised financial system. This is where availability and sources of funds is only from government monthly subventions. The locally collected revenue and donor aid has very little impact. But districts could respond to the lack of finance and the district inequalities by mobilising local resources and managing more efficiently their own revenues.

It is important to consider the issue of accountability inevitably associated with the decentralisation reforms. Accountability, according to Fullan (2005: 175), involves targets, inspection or form of monitoring along with action consequences. According to Anderson (2003: 10), accountability during reforms like decentralisation is not created only to gather information on district performance for planning, but also to hold officials at all levels accountable for progress towards the state goals, aligned with standards. It is this information

which translates into various supports to help the development of capacity in the district.

2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The general overview of the literature on decentralisation shows that decentralisation is a complex phenomenon. Hussein, (2004: 112), Work, (2002: 10) and McGinn and Welsh, (1999: 18) discusses that decentralisation is not an obvious one-off exercise but a long process. Decentralisation has to be understood comprehensively in its context, form and rationale. As Hussein (2004: 110) argues, this is important as it will provide a basis for identifying the potential and limits of a particular form of decentralisation as well as evaluate how effective the strategies are in ensuring its effective implementation. In Malawi, the primary objectives of administrative education decentralisation are to improve service deliver and to enhance participatory democracy and good governance through district assemblies and district offices (Local government act, 1998: 57). The study aims to examine how district decentralisation in Malawian education results in greater efficacy and improved participation and governance.

The conceptual framework of the study is influenced by the arguments and ideas made above. It is clear from the literature that the shift from centralisation to decentralisation is influenced by international and domestic pressures with different goals. The study follows Work's argument (2002: 18) that, as a reform strategy, decentralisation requires commitment, patience and dedication on the part of stakeholders, and that it can be a promising mechanism, if the conditions are favourable for achieving its goals of greater efficiency, participation, good governance and human development. The study will therefore test, in the district case study, to what extent these goals have been attained or are in the process of being achieved for the potential benefits of administrative decentralisation to be realised.

It is also clear from the literature that there are many areas of tensions and conflicts existing at all governance levels, and in particular at district level. Hence, this study will also examine the areas of tension and challenges at the district office as well as between districts and the other levels of authority and the way in which the districts respond to these.

2.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have looked at decentralisation as defined by various authors and found that decentralisation is a vague and complex phenomenon. Authors using different theoretical framework explain differently the origin and impact of decentralisation programs.

The origin and rationale for decentralisation is understood as the combination of external pressures by international agencies and internal political expediency in the national context. The rationale behind decentralisation appears to be increasing efficiencies and accountability, community participation and resource mobilisation. The advantages embraced in the study are improved efficiency, effectiveness and democracy. Failure to adhere to common standard, which is caused by differences in resources, is the obvious disadvantage.

The pre-conditions for successful implementation of decentralisation include staff and leadership capacity, accountability, commitment resources, stable political system and clear demarcation of roles and lines of accountability. The district's position in the implementation of decentralisation is also highlighted as it is a gateway for state policy and school needs as it relays instructions from head office to school as well as coordinate and respond to various school needs.

The argument that, decentralisation is often symbolic and that there is little evidence that decentralisation necessarily improves education efficiency and/or democracy through participation underpins the importance of this study.

The next chapter describes the research methods used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains and justifies the way in which I go about doing research. The interpretive paradigm and qualitative research method is discussed as well as the data gathering methods. This is done with theoretical support so as to understand the choices I have made.

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study is conducted in the interpretive paradigm, based on the understanding that interpretive involves qualitative approach. According to Terreblanche and Durrehelm (1999: 124) interpretive research "--- relies on first-hand information or account, and tries to describe what it sees in rich detail and presents its findings". Since this study intends to gain an in-depth understanding of the experience and developments associated with the implementation of education decentralisation in districts, the study adopts a qualitative research approach whose purpose is to understand the social phenomena from the respondents and participants' perspective (Macmillan and Schumacher, 2006: 26).

Qualitative research method is known for its flexibility in nature. It allows the decisions about data collection strategies also to be flexible. In qualitative research, the researcher becomes the research instrument, meaning that he/she becomes immersed in the research project (McMillan and Schumacher 2006: 26).

From the reasons mentioned above, it is clear that the qualitative method is most appropriate for this study, since decentralisation is a phenomenon, involving a group of people interacting in their practical context. In addition, the study intends

to examine the situation, dynamics and effects of such a process as perceived by various stakeholders.

Research design, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 117), is the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer the research question. It also provides the most valid and accurate answers possible for the research questions. It is important because it shows the individual what is to be studied, when, and under which conditions they may be studied.

The strength of qualitative research is that it is an attempt to inform our deep understanding of issues and thereby helps in the interpretation process. In the light of this, it is clear that the approach relevant to the study is the qualitative approach as it can assist with an understanding of the current trends and developments in the implementation of education decentralisation, as seen through the eyes of various actors at national level and district level. The study relies mainly on the perceptions, practices and experiences of various respondents in two different districts about decentralisation, in terms of their understanding, operations, implementation, effects and challenges.

I tried to maintain a reflective interaction with respondents as they begin to make sense of their situation as well as think about the meaning they attach to their actions. Since it is important to suspend the researcher's biases, perceptions and judgments, respondents such as the director of planning, district education manager, primary education advisor and head teachers will be encouraged to speak for themselves and present their own way of understanding education decentralisation and how it has affected their operations.

3.2 CASE STUDY

The manner in which data is collected is a crucial aspect of the research study as it determines its success or failure. The study uses the case study approach

because it is designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of participants by using multiple sources of data (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2006: 316). The study involves a case study of two districts. As Merriam (1998) points out, case studies are differentiated from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive description and analysis of a single or bounded system. According to MacMillan and Schumacher, (2006: 317), case study is described as a type of descriptive research in which data is gathered directly from individuals or community groups in their natural environment for purpose of studying interactions, attitudes and characteristics of the individual community. A case study is therefore appropriate for this study because it aims to understand two different districts and their operations in their natural environment. It is hoped that the two districts are sufficient to identify trends in the meaningful lessons and conclusions pertaining to the different implementations of district education decentralisation.

3.3 SAMPLING

MacMillan and Schumacher (2006: 126) describe a sample as the collective, group of subjects or participants from whom the data are collected. Sampling involves the drawing of the subject from the population for data collection. The study used purposeful sampling because according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 126), purposeful sampling is:

- Done when you want to understand something without needing to generalize to all.
- Done to increase the utility of information obtained from a small sample.
- Used because it is likely to be informative about the issues being investigated.
- Used in situations where simple random sampling can not be applied to give every one an equal chance of being selected due to limitations.

The study adopted purposive sampling which uses the researcher's judgment as to which districts are rich in the information to be tested to illustrate the research questions of the study. Due to time and transport limitations, two districts close to Blantyre (where the researcher was) were selected.

The two districts were selected based on characteristics such as districts' geographical location, socio-economic background and presence of NGOs. The first education district was Chiradzulu district because it was also the pilot for district decentralisation. The Chiradzulu initiative of 2000 was intended to see how affordable, equitable, good quality and replicable community-based primary education might be delivered in a single district (Davies *et al* 2003: 143). It was to operate in a context of increased district administrative responsibility, supported by government and international agencies in terms of deploying and training human resources and building of offices and school blocks infrastructure. This helped to assess how the government and international agencies support in the district affects education district operations.

The second education district was Mulanje, one of the rural districts in Malawi with an average socio-economic status, because of tea estates, which provide employment to most households in the district. Other households have formed tea growing farmers associations where they grow tea and sell to the estates. The district is committed to development by enlisting the assistance of NGOs in building of school blocks and teachers' houses. This allowed the researcher to understand the kind of district support (and its relevance) given by the NGOs in improving the efficiency of education district operations.

Participants were selected to ensure a good representation of the different levels involved with primary education delivery: the national, district, zone and school levels. Altogether, 15 participants were interviewed, one director of planning, two district education managers, four primary school advisors and eight head teachers. The respondents were interviewed at their work places. These work

places were first visited to seek permission and cooperation to conduct the study. They were briefed on the aim and subject of the study to acquaint them with the kind of information that was solicited and were given assurance of anonymity and confidentiality.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 415), the utilisation of different techniques of data collection is justified on the basis of their suitability and relevance to the nature and purpose of the research. Merriam (1998) cautioned that exclusive reliance on one method may lead to bias or distortion of the picture of the reality under investigation. In this case, the use of in-depth individual interviews from different stakeholders was supplemented by document analysis to complement each other. A study on the impact of district decentralisation of education, as perceived by various actors involved, is therefore best done by choosing two different data collection methods: individual in-depth interviews, guided by a semi-structured questionnaire, and document analysis.

Semi-structured interviews give choice to respondents as the questions are phrased to allow the respondents to elaborate. These are open ended questions but fairly specific in their focus and intent. They allow free flowing engagement which enables rich and detailed discussion of key elements. This enables the researcher to access specific information in a free interaction atmosphere with respondents.

Documents are records of past events prepared intentionally to preserve records or prepared for immediate practical use. As such documents express the organisation official perspective on the topic, issue or process. But the researcher does not extract evidence and does not find it easy to determine authenticity and accuracy to identify the content (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006: 428).

This study employed a combination of individual in-depth interviews at different levels of the education sector and document analysis, because there is no single source of information which could be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective. It was also important that data gathered through interviews was verified and validated through a different research instrument, such as document analysis (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006: 374). This was also a way of establishing a triangulation process, where the responses were cross checked with the policy documents.

INTERVIEWS

The study used semi-structured questionnaires for the interviews to get an insight into the origin and aim of decentralisation. Individual interviews were conducted, as Table 1 shows, with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology director of planning, two district education officials, four primary school education advisors and eight primary school head teachers.

Table 1 List of interviewees

NO.	INTERVIEWEE	OFFICE	ISSUES ASKED
1	Director of Planning	Ministry H/Q	Origin, purpose and forms of education decentralisation in practice.
2	District Education Managers	District education office	District education office, strategic planning, supporting and monitoring to schools
3	Primary school education advisors	Zone	Education zone support and monitoring to schools.
4	Head teachers	School	School management, monitoring and operations.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis involves the reviewing and analysis of official documents that were useful in terms of the information and themes the research was investigating. The documents include policy documents, circulars and reports.

Table 2: List of documents

NO.	DOCUMENT	PLACE	INFORMATION REQUIRED
1	Policy documents	Ministry Headquarters and District education office	Origin and aims decentralisation and roles and responsibilities devolved.
2	Circulars	Ministry Headquarters and District education office.	Instructions and procedures of operations in relation to decentralisation.
3	Reports(such as decentralisation evaluation reports)	Ministry Headquarters and District education office	Project reports and decentralisation evaluation reports.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis can be described as the systematic search and arranging of data from interview transcripts, which increases an understanding of the data and enables a clear and structured presentation. The qualitative data analysis is an ongoing process, which is integrated into all phases of qualitative research (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006: 417). McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 417) argue that the data to be analysed has to pass through inductive analysis which involves data coding, data categorizing and interpretation before providing an

explanation that makes sense. The qualitative data will be analysed using grounded theory. According to Merriam (1998), grounded theory involves grouping data into segments and categories which are compared to derive similarities and differences. The analysis seeks to establish pattern in the data and any relationship development developed from such patterns builds on into a theory grounded in the data.

Cross-case analysis within and between districts was used to explore relationship and patterns that will emerge from the individual districts.

3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity is a judgment of appropriateness of a measure. It is important to have validity in relation to instruments used to collect and analyse data (McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 324). This study has tried to describe and justify all the instruments and methods in use in terms of their appropriateness at ensuring validity of data collection and analysis. This was also done by conducting a pilot study to test the interview schedule and improve it.

Reliability is a measure of consistency, which is the extent to which the results are similar over different forms of the same instrument or occasion of data collection (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006: 183). The researcher tried to ensure that the respondents felt at ease during the interviews and had time to reflect on the questions to ensure that their answers were genuine. Thus, the study tried to get different data collection approaches and methods to maximize the reliability and validity of the findings.

3.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

MacMillan and Schumacher (2006: 16) describe ethics as a consideration of fairness, honesty, openness of intent, disclosure of methods, respect of integrity

of the individual, individual privacy and informed willingness on the part of the subject to participate voluntarily in the research activity. Since the issue this study is investigating might result in some respondents not giving information by fear of reprisal by their managers, it was imperative to be ethically conscious by explaining the importance of the investigation and the type of information required and guarantee respondents' confidentiality by respondents' anonymity.

3.8 LIMITATIONS

The limitation of the study is that no generalisation can be made. The fact that the case study was only on two districts is a limitation because, if this was a fully-fledged project, a much broader area and sample population would have been included in the investigation. The study may suffer from the weakness that interpretive studies are inclined to exhibit, which is the subjective nature of interpretive case study research. My use of triangulation at different stages may hopefully have gone a long way towards validating my findings. Accessibility of interviewees in Malawi was a problem because of the short time spent there and the interviewees' busy schedules. Lack of trust emanated every now and then because some questions touched on the performance of their units/institutions and therefore their bosses and the interviewees had some reservations about sharing all their views openly. These appeared to have constituted the main limitations of the study.

3.9 SUMMARY

I have shown that this study is conducted in an interpretive paradigm as a way of capturing the rich detail of the researched phenomenon. The significance of the interpretive orientation and qualitative approach has been pointed out. I have supported the use of case study method in my investigation as appropriate because it helps in understanding the deeper features of a case in a given context.

I have shown that, apart from document analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of various actors' perceptions of the impact of decentralisation and also to have a two-way interaction and discussion to allow for greater depth.

Data analysis and discussion was done after a thorough understanding of the interviews' content. The selected themes from the literature were used to summarize and categorize the data collected and to highlight the important features of the decentralisation implementation process.

I have noted that ethical considerations have been accommodated to ensure that the research is conducted honestly and that respect for people was an overriding consideration.

The next chapter discusses results.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON TWO DISTRICTS: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the data presentation and analysis of the implementation of decentralisation and its impact on districts. The research question seeks to understand how district education offices functioned, since decentralisation was instituted in 1998. My approach is to present these ideas and perceptions of the different stakeholders affected by decentralisation, as they have emerged from the semi-structured interviews which were structured in terms of the categories/themes identified in the literature.

The presentation is in a narrative conversation and includes varying use of long and short embedded quotes as the narrative unfolds to describe the decentralisation implementation. The major task is to gain the respondents' view on education decentralisation and its impact on the overall performance of primary schools in the district.

The introduction of decentralisation to different district assemblies was meant to improve service delivery, enhance participatory democracy and good governance (Local government act, 1998: 4). District assemblies are encouraged to be independent and self-reliant. In order to achieve this, different departments in the district assemblies are taking active roles to fulfill the new roles and responsibilities. There are many challenges which district assemblies are experiencing, particularly, regarding the resources and skills required to exercise the new roles and responsibilities. This study intends to answer the following questions: how do district education offices function, since decentralisation was

instituted in 1998, and to what extent have their operations been affected and changed?

4.1.1 SAMPLE INTERVIEWED

In line with Macmillan and Schumacher (2006: 126) I purposely sampled 15 respondents because they satisfied the sufficiency and saturation requirement Interviews were conducted at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarters and in two districts. The director of planning was interviewed at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarters, two district education managers were interviewed at the two sampled district education offices, four primary school education advisors were interviewed at education zone offices, two from each of the two districts sampled. Eight head teachers were interviewed at primary schools, two from each of the four sampled education zones. The respondents were interviewed in their respective work places after getting permission from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarters and district education offices. The interviews were conducted in vernacular language except three because most respondents were not proficient enough to respond in English.

In total, the study involved fifteen interviews:

Ministry Headquarters;

- Director of planning

District education offices;

- District education manager EA
- District education manager EB

District A zones;

- PEA. EA1
- PEA. EA2

District B zones;

- PEA. EB1

- PEA. EB2

Zone EAI primary schools;

- Head teacher. EA1a
- Head teacher. EA1b

Zone EA2 primary schools;

- Head teacher. EA2a
- Head teacher. EA2b

Zone EB1 primary schools;

- Head teacher. EB1a
- Head teacher. EB1b

Zone EB2 primary schools;

- Head teacher. EB2a
- Head teacher. EB2b

4.2 MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS

4.2.1 BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: RESPONSIBILITY OF HEADQUARTERS

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is the biggest among all government ministries in Malawi and it commands the lion share of the national budget (20%). The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarters has departments with different functions and responsibilities related to the management of education in the country. There are several departments which include: the department of planning, the department of finance, the department of human resources, the department of primary and basic education and the department of secondary and higher education. Each departmental director reports to the principal secretary. As a response to the Malawi National Decentralisation Policy, education decentralisation mainly involved the primary and basic education department which was under pressure with the high primary school enrolment which followed the free primary education policy of 1994, a

response to the Education for All (EFA) campaign. Other departments whose functions are cross cutting, such as human resources, finance and planning also took part.

The education system in Malawi is managed through an education central office at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarters, six education divisional offices, responsible for the running of secondary education, and thirty-three education district offices, responsible for the running of primary school education. There are also three-hundred and seventeen education zones responsible for primary school monitoring and supervision and 5231 primary schools.

Table 3. National basic education statistics

No.		2006	2005	2004
1	Education divisions	6	6	6
2	Education districts	33	33	33
3	Education zones	317	317	317
4	Primary schools	5231	5159	5103
5	Teachers	43197	43376	43952
6	Learners	3280714	3200646	3166786
7	Teacher /learner ration	1:76	1:74	1:72
8	Classroom	38208	37792	37022
9	Permanent Classroom/learner ratio	1:107	1:106	1:107
10	Population density	105	105	105

(Source. Basic Education Statistics 2004-2006 MoE)

According to the Policy Investment Framework (PIF 2001: 2), the recommended classroom/learner and teacher/learner ratio is 1:60, but table 3 shows that the

national teacher/learner ratio in Malawi is at 1:76 and a teacher shortage of 11482 teachers. The government has the responsibility of training teachers to meet this number, including unqualified teachers who are already working as temporary teachers.

Although the PIF (2001: 2) indicates that, by 2002, responsibility to recruit teachers would lie with district education offices, this has not been done yet. This is symbolic of the low commitment levels demonstrated by education headquarters as pointed by Weiler (1990:436). The records still show that the responsibility of recruiting teachers falls within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarters through the Public Service Commission. Follow Work's argument (2002: 18) decentralisation requires commitment, patience and dedication on the part of stakeholders, which is not the case here. Teacher availability is low with the number of unqualified teachers going down, and the number of newly qualified teachers increasing (but not as much as the decrease in the number of unqualified teachers). The number of unqualified teachers (see table 3) declined from 6419 in 2005 to 4356 in 2006, or a decrease of 2073 while the qualified teachers increased by only 185. The causes of this situation are not clear but could involve teachers resigning, prolonged teacher sickness and deaths due to HIV and AIDS.

The decrease in the number of teachers is an issue of concern because decentralisation has put more responsibility on districts and schools for better service delivery and this cannot be achieved without more qualified teachers. Further, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology attributed the fall in the number of teachers to the failure by the head quarters to recruit and post teachers to districts. There are also district disparities in the shortage of teachers which the education headquarters needs to compensate for by deploying more teachers to certain districts.

The director of planning claims that the devolution of the responsibility for recruiting teachers to district education offices is not happening partly because the government is unprepared to devolve further responsibilities. Yet as pointed by Work (2002: 18), decentralisation requires commitment and dedication on the part of the main stakeholders, in this case the government, without which the quality and efficiency of education delivery, which decentralisation is assumed to bring, will be compromised. This is because learners will not receive sufficient and required attention from the few teachers available.

The permanent classroom/learner ratio is at 1:107 which shows a classroom shortage of 54679-38208= 16471 classrooms. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is not responsible for building school blocks, according to the director of planning, but it helps districts in soliciting funds for the construction of schools. The willingness by the headquarters to assist in soliciting support for construction of school blocks is a sign of commitment, so that the goals set up can be achieved easily. On the same note, the support to district enables the district leadership to pursue its dreams and determination, knowing that they have full support from head quarters. Knowing that decentralisation did not give district assemblies a budget for the building and maintenance of schools. This means that the construction of 16471 classrooms, which are not yet built, and the 7475 temporary classrooms, are the responsibility of the district assembly and school communities. There is an indication of an increase of 2.2% in the number of permanent classrooms, from the national record of 2004, 2005 and 2006 (see table 3), which is a positive sign of communities taking responsibility for the development of schools.

As pointed by Dyer and Rose (2005: 106), there is a belief that development could be achieved if some responsibility shifted to the district assembly and school communities. The school communities are expected to take charge of school development and it appears that classroom building and learner enrolment has registered positive increases, compared to recruitment of

teachers, the latter being the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

History of education in Malawi shows that education was started by the missionaries as a way of making people understand the word of God. The government started building schools later, and gradually it took over the responsibility of running the church schools. This development did not change the ownership of schools because churches still had powers over what was happening in their schools. The government was funding the school operations and providing teachers. The two district education managers pointed that churches only has the responsibility of appointing the school head teacher whom they make sure is a dedicated member of the church, so that their doctrine is not misrepresented in the school.

Table 4 Primary School Characteristics according to Ownership (2006)

	Government	Religious	Private	Total
School	1904	3137	190	5231
Classrooms	12881	23954	1373	38208
Teachers	16077	25560	1560	43197
Learners	1154439	2088044	38231	3280714

(Source. Basic Education Statistics 2006 MoE)

According to table 4 which shows the status of primary school ownership in Malawi, there are more religious schools than government schools. In any decentralisation attempt, there is a need to include all stakeholders and, according to Spillane and Thompson (1997: 185), form networks and partnership to mobilize a broader number of constituencies. Yet in Malawi, decentralisation has not managed to get religious agencies, as stakeholders, to be involved in district development in general and education development in particular. Churches being one of the bigger social gathering institutions, the involvement of churches would have helped with the advocacy of decentralisation. The changes

in education administration also expect school communities to take responsibility over school development activities, and yet the church could have been a better forum for disseminating these development messages.

4.2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE ORIGIN AND AIMS OF DECENTRALISATION IN MALAWI

Understanding the purpose, role and limitations of decentralisation by stakeholders is an important aspect because, as mentioned by Hussein (2004: 107), it provides a basis for identifying viable strategies and ensuring effective decentralisation and sustainable development. To understand the concept, policy content and management of the implementation of decentralisation requires stakeholders to have access to relevant information and knowledge, which is fundamental in the development of a wide range of skills and capacities needed to deal with the complex tasks involved in decentralisation.

An understanding of the decentralisation concept by the Ministry headquarters was evidenced by the way the director of planning described the principles and practices behind decentralisation. The director of planning is well informed may be because the planning, implementation and monitoring of the decentralisation progress are the responsibility of his office. But, decentralisation being a national project it is vital that every officer is involved and not only the director to be knowledgeable because lack of understanding discourages participation.

On the purpose and origin of decentralisation, the director of planning said:

> "Decentralisation is there to provide the lower levels with authority. It was initiated specifically with the aim of empowering the district education office to implement issues without seeking approval from the parent Ministry. Decentralisation was adopted in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology as a directive from the Malawi National Decentralisation Policy where all government departments were mandated to take on board decentralisation in their operation plans. It was a question of looking at what the Malawi National Decentralisation Policy is recommending and finding how to fit into the policy".

This implies that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarters adopted and implemented education decentralisation for efficiency purposes with the hope that it will ultimately benefit the local community. Indeed, there was also pressure created by the 1994 free primary education policy, which meant that the government felt the need to involve school communities to assist in addressing some of the Education for All (EFA) challenges. It is important here to remember that the literature (Weiler 1990: 436; Gershberg and Winkler 2003: 9) points out that decentralisation can be an excuse for central ministries to pass the burden lower down to cover up for their failures.

On the reason to devolve authority to district education office level and not to the other education structures below the district education office, the director of planning said:

> "The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology structures go as far as primary schools, but this decentralisation was to be implemented in liaison with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, as the pioneers of the whole exercise which have structures up to the district assembly. Ideally it would have been preferable that the education decentralisation activities had gone as far as schools, but one must bear in mind the practicality of Malawi in terms of funds and capacity and I do not see that as a realistic assumption".

Thus the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology recognised the importance of capacity and resources in implementing decentralisation and argued that it was possible to do that at district but not at school level. This puts district to act as gatekeeper for schools to translate and interpret the state policies. By accepting that there is lack of capacity at primary school level is a challenge which is suppose to be in a future plans, so it is important to consider raising the capacity of primary school leadership in preparation for the devolving of responsibility in the near future.

Another reason for decentralizing to districts and not to schools came with the fact that it was pioneered by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development which believed that decentralisation was a vital link to its rural development approach. Literature clearly stipulates that decentralisation is a

vague, slippery and complex concept, as described by Bray (1985: 184), decentralisation covers a wide range of processes and structures. While Naidoo (2003: 3) points out that decentralisation takes many forms, depending on the level of government to which decisions are devolved and the kind of decisions moved to these other levels of government and the rationale behind it. And Chimombo (2005: 3) says education decentralisation is complex because it has different meanings and refers to different types and reforms of decentralised education administration, management and government system with different policy aims and strategies. This shows that adopting the decentralisation concept which fits department of Local Government and Rural Development in terms of strategy and rationale puts a big challenge to successful implementation of education decentralisation.

Education departments were conscious of the need to maintain equal standards, which they found difficult to implement at district level because the headquarters education structures were supposed to be instituted at district level. Yet, districts had no time to prepare themselves with appropriate structures and capacity building for securing and monitoring standards.

4.2.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALISATION

4.2.3.1 DISTRICT FUNCTIONS

The director of planning pointed out that the main responsibilities devolved to districts are school monitoring and advice and the control over development activities and finances, which include budget preparation and budget implementation. However, the Ministry is keeping a close eye to make sure education quality is maintained. This is why the director of planning pointed out that districts and head teachers needed to competently manage the resources and other devolved responsibilities they were now in charge of. Headquarters

seem unprepared to release the responsibilities to district level as they are keen to mention their concern over district competency in handling resources.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology support given to district education offices consisted of management training to assume their responsibilities for finances, budgeting and policy implementation. There was also planning assistance, because the district needs to plan its activities, and training on school advice and monitoring, as well as raising funds from donors. This shows that the Ministry headquarters felt responsible to ensure that the district decentralisation initiative succeeds. And this support will automatically motivate the district to push for a successful implementation of decentralisation.

School monitoring and supervision are popular terms which have replaced inspection which was more intimidating and judgmental than developmental. Schools are now supervised by the district education office, and the Ministry headquarters is using the district reports in its decision making on district and school support policies. The director of planning acknowledged that the district school monitoring and supervision suffers from issues related to the inadequate district capacity such as high staff turnover, poor funding and poor supply of resource (still a responsibility of the Ministry headquarters). This puts pressure on the headquarters to address the shortfalls which would not have been the case if the devolution of responsibilities to districts had been more complete.

Another important allocated function to the district assembly is school development, which involves construction, maintenance, rehabilitation and improvement of infrastructure such as school blocks and teacher houses. In order to achieve this, the government encouraged assemblies to establish development partners and to raise funds privately through revenue collections or by charging various fees (LGA 1996: 4). The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarters confirmed that it supports indirectly school development by helping districts request for funds from development partners.

Development support is usually based on proposals which the Ministry prepares. District assemblies have development committees, which comprise the district commissioner, heads of departments and development partners in charge of development proposals. This confirms the literature which argues that decentralisation is often seen as a useful exercise to mobilize local resources (Dyer and Rose, 2005: 106).

Donors and other development partners have directly supported districts. Today in Malawi, education at all levels of the education system is accessible to donors for support and implementation of development projects. According to the director of planning, there have been many donor-funded projects for capacity building and supply of resources for the implementation of decentralisation.

This confirms Davies *et al* (2003: 140) argument that decentralisation is often an initiative of international agencies and bilateral donors, as a way of bypassing the central state and promoting democratic governance principles. The fact that donors go direct to schools seems to suggest that donors are for education decentralisation in Malawi.

There are some cases where donors come to a district to do what they want to do, and the assemblies just accommodate their program by making these donor projects district projects. The director of planning said:

> "There is an initiative by donors to support schools directly which is called direct school support (DSS). Decision by donors to give support to schools directly has unfortunately led to support in areas which are not the Ministry's priorities".

This kind of donor interference or imposition of projects at district level represents a challenge for districts and their leadership. The latter has to work out how to ensure that donors do not impose their agendas as partners but that the districts make them address the issues on the national development agenda in the districts.

4.2.3.2 DISTRICT AND SCHOOL CAPACITY BUILDING

The importance of capacity building was clearly noted by the director of planning from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology who said:

> "Besides the requirements that every district education manager must have at least a first degree, they need basic relevant education management knowledge which they lack. This can only be corrected by capacity building and giving the managers basic relevant skills about the management of education. It has been the government effort to make all the stakeholders in decentralisation to be sufficiently equipped to actively contribute to the implementation of decentralisation. This has been done by instituting different courses and workshops with the help of partners".

It is important that Ministry headquarters prioritize capacity building to achieve efficiency because, according to Hussein (2004: 107), the administrative capacity of most districts is insufficient to ensure the effective discharge of the often enormous obligations devolved upon them. Bray and Mukundan (2003: 9) point out that the major issue for administrators in education decentralisation is how to manage teachers and maximize their effectiveness as well as decide at what level of administration the supervision and management of teachers should rest.

Spillane and Thompson (1997: 199) argue that it is important to build the capacity of the leadership to create a conducive environment for schools. But the district leadership needs also to learn how to respond effectively to disparities within the district with the implementation of education decentralisation. The capacity building mentioned here sidelines the capacity at primary school level because the decentralisation is up to district level. But it is important for school effectiveness sake to make improvement of school leadership capacity a priority as well.

4.2.4 EFFECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALISATION

4.2.4.1 POSITIVE EFFECTS

It was the intention of decentralisation and the devolution of powers to districts in Malawi to promote the involvement of more stakeholders in the management and decision making as well as achieve an increased mobilization and efficiency of resources. The director of planning was encouraged by the support from new partners:

> "The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has been encouraged and motivated to proceed with education decentralisation because many partners are helping, with capacity building and development projects. The local government has also played a role in promoting the implementation of education decentralisation by acting as a watchdog. The action by the Ministry of Finance in accepting to give financial responsibility to the districts has also motivated the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in the implementation of education decentralisation".

There is an expectation that the headquarters will implement decentralisation better if it sees and is inspired and motivated by the support of other partners. This positive attitude of the headquarters will in turn encourage districts and schools.

4.2.4.2 OBSTACLES

The Ministry headquarters sees obstacles in the process of decentralisation:

> "There is a failure to complete the process and move forward. This is a long process even though people thought it is going to be an immediate change".

The Ministry initially saw decentralisation as a short and not long process. But more importantly, the Ministry is not happy, as mentioned earlier, that donors are bypassing their office, by going straight to schools and not targeting national priority areas. This shows how unprepared the Ministry headquarters is with the unintended consequences of decentralisation. It is also interesting to note that

the director of planning does not acknowledge that the bureaucracy of headquarters is sometimes a problem. Yet districts and schools are better positioned than the Ministry headquarters to decide on what to prioritize in terms of school or district support.

4.3 DISTRICT A

4.3.1 DISTRICT PROFILE

District (A) is situated in the southern region of Malawi and falls under the shire highland education division. It borders two cities to the west, and north, as well as two tea producing districts to the east and south. Despite the district's boarder with viable economic nodes and regions, the district has a very low socio-economic status and a high population density. District (A) is poor and the second largest densely populated district in Malawi. The main source of income is farming where products like maize, chicken, cattle and milk which fetch low prices in government markets and or when sold to private traders.

Table 5. District Assembly 'A' Profile

		Total
1	Government departments	21
2	Members of parliament	5
3	Non-Governmental organisations	23
4	Traditional Authority chiefs	10
	Total assembly members	59
5	Population density per sq/km	308

(Source: District assembly annual report 2006)

Table 5 shows that this district assembly has a large membership with a total of 59 members. The greater the representation of government departments and

NGOs in the district assembly the bigger and stronger is the district executive committee at making decisions about the developments in the district.

The high number of NGOs in district (A) is due to many reasons. One is that district (A) was selected as a pilot district to implement decentralisation and, as a result, many NGOs came to support this district. Looking at what most NGOs in district (A) are working with (livelihood, health and education), it is clear that this district is characterised by high poverty and high population density. Because education is a priority in district (A), many education NGOs exist in this district, indicating that a positive development of decentralisation is that it can mobilize development partners. The literature (Davies et al, 2003: 139; Dyer and Rose 2005: 106; Spillane and Thompson 1997: 199) indicates that decentralisation needs support and that it is the responsibility of the district leadership to generate social capital through networking with partners or NGOs for the benefit of district development.

DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE

The district education office in district (A) is situated at the centre of the district which is at the mountain base of Chiradzulu Mountain. It is a new office, which has just been built by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) project alongside the construction of several school blocks.

Table 6 District A Education Office Staffing

		Officer
1	District education manager	1
2	Deputy District education manager	0
3	Desk Officer	0
4	Method advisor	1
5	Senior Primary advisor	1
6	Planning Officer	0

7	Principal human resources officer	0
8	Principal accountant	0

(Sources: District office staff list 2007)

The district education office has a serious shortage of relevant staff (see table 6). The reason for the shortage of staff, is that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has not provided the required number and relevant high graded staff in line with the post establishments. This means most of the work in the district education office is being done by junior staff. Spillane and Thompson (1997: 187) point out that districts need capacity building strategies to strengthen their human capacities to work effectively. This has not happened in this district education office. But Spillane and Thompson (1997: 187), argues that human capital is vital and training is needed for staff to develop a greater sense of responsibility, trust and participation.

Table 7. District A Basic Education Statistics.

	ITEM	2006	2005	2004
1	Education zones	8	8	8
2	Primary schools	92	87	81
3	Teachers	984	1030	989
4	Learners	78602	78375	76208
5	Teacher/ learner ratio.	1:80	1:77	1:76
6	Classrooms	992	984	984
7	Classroom ratio	1:81	1:84	1:81

(Source. Basic Education Statistics 2004-2006 MoE)

Table 7 shows that the number of schools in the district is increasing, an indication of the supportive role played by the school community, NGOs and development partners which have contributed to the building of school blocks and opening of new schools. There is also an increase in the number of permanent classrooms and a decrease of temporary classrooms (a 2.8% rise in

two years)(see table 7). The classroom/learner ratio is 1:81 which is on a higher side compared to the national policy investment framework requirement of 1:60. The increase in classrooms signifies the effort by the school community, NGOs and development partners. As Spillane and Thompson (1997: 199) argue, district leadership can mobilize stakeholders' resources, resulting in further development. Spillane, (2003: 343) asserts that leadership capacity is critical in developing and sustaining conditions believed essential for successful implementation of education quality.

The numbers of teachers in district (A) is going down. The district education manager (EA) confirmed that there is a big problem of replacement of teachers when a teacher resigns or dies. The matter has been reported several times to the Ministry headquarters, but nothing has been done to help replace these teachers. This has put pressure on the district because teaching and learning has to be carried out as per national standards despite staff shortages.

DISTRICT ZONES

Of the 8 zone offices in district (A), the study sampled two in two different localities. The zone EA1 is situated in the east remote side of the district but is relatively accessible. The idea of zones is that it will enable the services to become more responsive and tailored to the needs of the different localities. The zone is managed by the primary education advisor only and its core responsibility is around school monitoring and advising.

Table 8 District A Zones EA1and EA2 statistics.

	Zone	School	Teacher	Learners	T/L ratio
1	EA1	10	86	8950	1:104
2	EA2	10	112	10440	1:93

(Sources: District school statistics)

The zone (EA2) is situated at the centre of the district, close to the district education office. The zone has a big number of learners (10440 EA2 and 8950 for EA1) and of teachers (112 for EA2 and 89 for EA1) and its teacher/learner ratio is still far from the recommended ratio of 1:60. The town locality may contribute to a large number of learners and teachers. The situation where two zones of the same districts having different number of schools as well as number of teachers and learners means different zones have different challenges to deal with. This is the issue which decentralisation planning process need to considered to reduce the disparities happening in one district.

4.3.2 UNDERSTANDING THE ORIGIN AND AIMS OF DECENTRALISATION IN MALAWI

It is interesting to note that there is very little information available about decentralisation to district (A) stakeholders. There are no decentralisation documents at the district assembly or at the district education office, indicating that the decentralisation was implemented without many useful documents being distributed and kept at district office. The only documents available are seminar notes from workshops and seminars run by NGOs, primarily for advocacy purposes. This situation seems to have limited the participation of the district at the district assembly. The district education manager (EA) appears to be the one reasonably knowledgeable person because of seminars organised for district education managers and district assemblies for the implementation of decentralisation.

This situation is problematic. It is important to have information and a certain capacity to understand decentralisation if effective implementation is expected, as pointed by many writers on decentralisation. (McGinn and Welsh 1999: 24 and Naidoo 2003: 15). According to Spillane and Thompson (1997:

187), to build district capacity is one of the most important priority for the district leadership, and this does not seem to be the case in this district.

On the reason behind decentralisation, the district education manager (EA) said:

> "I believe when power is close to where the work is done, the services are more effectively done, there are no delays in asking for approval and consultation and work is done more effectively as the district has responsibility of being accountable when it fails".

And further:

> "This is where education decisions in the district are supposed to come from. Decentralisation makes the district education office responsible and accountable for the activities in the district."

The district education manager (EA) claims that the aim of decentralisation is to promote efficiency and local participation in decision making within a minimum period of time. This is because district education managers have to work according to mandates as well as be responsible and accountable to the government and school communities.

4.3.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECENTRALISATION PROCESS

4.3.3.1 DISTRICT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to prepare for the challenges and duties associated with decentralised functions, stakeholders need to know their roles and responsibilities and the explanation of what is expected of them when the functions are devolved.

The district education manager (EA) said on the role of the district office:

> "The biggest thing is funding which has been devolved to the district office. We are funded according to our budget and we are able to sit down and see what exactly we should do with the money to achieve our plans".

So the district education office controls funds for its operations, looks after primary school activities by supporting them with resources and skill development. The challenge is how to deal with the disparities existing in the district. The disparities include the number of teachers and learners in different schools and the availability of resources. It appears the district education manager focuses more on implementation and not on generation or mobilization of resources for implementation. It appears as if most officers at the lower level understand that their new decentralized roles is to look after the money and how to spend, forgetting the importance of mobilizing extra funds to run better the activities that are now their responsibility.

About other responsibilities which have not been devolved to the district education office, the district education manager (EA) said:

> "The district education office has no powers over curriculum content and the nature of the curriculum. The district education office has no powers on most issues related to teachers such as teacher disciplinary action, teacher recruitment, and teacher promotion and teacher remuneration. The district also has no power over supplies of resources".

The district education manager (EA) showed concerns that these functions which are not decentralised affect district education managers' service delivery, such as teachers' welfare and other teacher related issues which require immediate attention to motivate them to teach. In the current arrangement, district education managers can not discipline a teacher, a frustrating situation for the district education manager. This is a problem in the implementation of decentralisation.

The responsibility for budget operations gives the district education office authority, which is undermined by the lack of resources which the district office has no authority over. It is tricky that the district education manager is supposed to provide schools with resources but has no authority over acquisition of such resources. This situation makes work difficult because the district education manager is denied responsibility to supply what districts regard as key school priority needs to ensure quality education.

Those devolving the authority are not in a position to appreciate the responsibilities that are appropriate to devolve for effective implementation. Indeed, those involved at district level were not consulted about what was to be devolved to them. Elmore (1993: 40) emphasises the need for consultation because questions raised during the initial conceptualisation stages are key in influencing and improving implementation strategies.

The primary school education advisors (EA1, EA2) reported that their main roles are to support teaching and learning in schools by advising, supervising, monitoring and inspecting the school professional and administrative operations. The education zone office has been empowered to make decisions in response to the observations made during inspections on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. So, the zone office is the information centre for the planning activities of the districts and Ministry headquarters.

While the responsibilities devolved to the zone are important and crucial, the requirements for the post and scale of education advisors are very low. Decisions made in the 317 zones by junior staff can be poor and the possibility of misleading or not giving sound advice to schools is high. Yet literature (Hussein 2004: 107 and Bray 1985: 184) has emphasised the need for competent and knowledgeable human resources if decentralisation is to be effective.

The school experience of decentralisation to districts and whether district responsibilities change how head teachers work, is commented on by the head teacher (EA2b):

> "The change is the supply of resources and some training which have improved and made my work simple. I am encouraged by regular visiting by the primary school advisor".

Thus, support to schools with resources, regular visits and training by primary school advisors are seen as a positive development associated with decentralisation. According to McGinn and Welsh (1999: 24), effective decentralisation of education needs to strengthen school capacities and leadership by providing support to schools through resources and professional development.

4.3.3.2 DISTRICT DECISION MAKING

The District education office has to make decisions on operations as well as the key priority of how to improve teaching and learning. The district management has a management style which accommodates various stakeholders in decision making and fulfills the additional administration functions. The district education manager (EA) said:

> "The district education manager as head of the office summons the responsible officers for a meeting to make decisions on issues which involve the office operations. There are two types of decisions made, the professional and the general office administration. The professional decisions are made in consultation with the method advisor and the senior primary education advisors. The general administration decisions are made in consultation with the method advisor who acts as the deputy district education manager".

However, consultation appears to be undermined by staff shortage, as there are only three staff members in the district, out of the seven post establishments existing for the district office. This situation means that decisions are sometimes made by two or three people. This development affects the efficiency of the decisions made, because there are few minds to deliberate the points and reach a consensus on behalf of the district education office. This indicates how poorly equipped the district is to run schools in the district on one hand and lack of will and commitment by the headquarters to address district disparities by increasing staff and resources in the district.

The education zones offices (EA1, EA2) work as a school monitoring office, a training centre and meeting point for stakeholders in the zone. They have their own way of making decisions. The decisions made by primary school advisors about the professional task of teaching and learning are made in consultation with the school head teachers in the zone while decisions concerning school development involve the school community. According to EA1, the education zones were instituted to promote participation involving all stakeholders as well as community involvement and ownership in school development activities.

It appears that all primary school advisors approach issues in the same manner in their respective zones. This may be due to the training which they attend on zone management and how to work with schools and communities on development issues. This confirms what Rose (2003: 46) argues, that collective decision making works best because when solutions come from all stakeholders, they are easier to implement.

The zones and schools seem to be working well together. Head teachers (EA1a, EA1b, EA2a, EA2b) indicated that they run their schools as if they are the property of the government and the community which they serve. They make decisions in relation to what the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, their advisors and the school community expect from them. There is a commitment to consultation in school decision making. The danger is these consultations and decision making is being made by the same people the director of planning has called not competent enough to run education in a decentralised set up.

Head teachers, in turn, consult their deputy head teacher and the school management team, which comprises departmental heads and senior teachers. Depending on the issues, teachers, students' representatives and the chair of school committee are also involved sometimes.
The head teacher (EA1a) said:

> "The agenda for meetings covers new developments at the school and reports or information from the advisor".

Thus, it appears as if schools are committed to work with the zone office as partners in order to improve the quality of education.

However, tensions also develop. Although the interaction between primary schools and zones is based on trust, this is sometimes undermined by the failure of the district education office to provide the schools and zones with the resources they need and expect. The zone puts pressure on the district education office, which in turn pushes the headquarters to supply the resources required. This results in tensions between district education office and zones as well as the district education office and the headquarters.

4.3.3.3 DISTRICT SUPPORT: SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING

The district functions as expected because it has been enabled by the support provided by the partners. The district education manager (EA), said:

> "The support the district education office receives is from the Ministry headquarters, district assembly and other agencies. The Ministry headquarter supports the district education office by allocating teachers, supplying books. The assembly is helping the district education office in different ways, such as providing the department with transport during salaries delivery, rehabilitation of school blocks and teachers' houses and planning of development activities".

It appears that this district education office is supported by the Ministry head quarters, the assembly, NGOs and development partners, a situation which shows the interest which the district education office has.

It is the district education office obligation to support the education zone and primary schools. The main support to the education zone is in terms of the zones' operations, which include transport such as motor cycles, fuel and stationery. The primary school advisor (EA1) said:

> "The district supports the zone with the resources, transport and training on how primary school advisors should work to meet the district expectations".

The district office does not support schools directly as this is done by education zone. The zone's support to schools includes; school daily activities, school management and administration through training on: keeping of records, discipline and good class practices. The zones also support schools by conducting training for school committees and parents/teacher associations to ensure they know their roles.

A school head teacher (EA1a) said:

> "The support that schools receive from the zone is for running schools according to the district expectations. The biggest support from the zone has been in- service training. The support currently on record from the district consists of books, which are not our priority now, because what we need most from them are teachers and they are not providing them to us".

Primary schools are indeed more concerned about their need for teachers because of the serious teacher shortage. This is a difficult issue because, once the district office is pressurised by primary schools and the zone, it can only report this shortage to the headquarters. The district education office is powerless at responding directly to the schools' needs and stand caught between the schools' demands and the headquarters' inability to respond to these school demands.

According to Spillane and Thompson (1997: 187), the district leadership lies in its ability to get access to extra professional and material sources as well as learn new ideas from outside. This is how the district leadership can create a conducive environment to successfully support the district education activities. Unfortunately, there is little evidence of this in this district.

For the infrastructural developments in the district, it appears as if the district assembly and district education office are in-charge of writing funding proposals for donors to finance them. The district education manager (EA) said:

> "The district education office prepares proposals which are submitted to prospective donors to consider funding. Out of proposals of this nature, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has constructed a number of school blocks and teachers houses in the district, including this district education office".

The district capacity is indeed being supported by the development partners. The capacity to attract donors to work in the district is the responsibility of the district office. But it is important to note that a strong dependence on donor initiatives for development is not a healthy situation, and that there should be other ways of securing developments in the district.

District assemblies have different potentials at raising funds. Apart from donors, most of the funds in the district come from government monthly subvention, which, according to the director of planning, is done on the basis of the budget submitted. The government support is based on the school learner population and school needs. In addition, district assemblies can also raise money from revenue collections. This district education office appears to have no plans to locally raise funds for the schools and seems to depend totally on the government subvention, based on the budget presented. The rationale used to determine funds allocation seam to discriminate the district and school with few learners and poor at the same time. This means its important to have funds generated and distributed at the district, so that the problems experienced could be appreciated.

The zones are frustrated when trying to fundraise from the community. According to the primary school education advisor (EA2), zone fundraising is hindered because the free primary education policy implies that schooling is free for learners. So when fundraising is done, many parents refuse to make any contributions towards school fundraising. In the end, the parents only offer

services toward school development activities. This is why the district office wants the policy on school development to clarify the responsibility of school communities regarding school development activities.

4.3.3.4 DISTRICT AND CAPACITY BUILDING.

Any policy change like decentralisation requires learning by those who implement it (Spillane and Thompson 1997: 186 and Elmore 1993: 49). In this case, it is the district education office which is implementing and needs to learn and understand the new policy. This capacity building, according to Modal (2000: 489) could be organised by the government, Non-governmental organisations or donors. This could be achieved in isolation or in combination of some stakeholders as partners.

The district education office targets school capacity building as a priority. The district education manager EA mentioned:

> "The district education office is responsible for the development of teacher skills and this is done by organizing in-service training in the department for teachers and head teachers on administration, school committees and parent and teacher associations. The training requirements are established through questionnaires or needs assessment survey about training".

Capacity building appears limited at district level due to shortage of resources and also because much of the training is done through the zone office. As a primary school training centre, the zone organizes different training programs, including the training of teachers as well head teachers to deepen subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogical decision making skills. It is pointed by Spillane and Thompson (1997: 199) that the capacity of district education office to create a conducive environment for capacity building to achieve the headquarters' expectation will influence whatever zone and primary schools need to know.

The primary school advisor (EA2) said:

> "The zone office is the training centre but not only for teachers. The school committees are also trained on how to identify the school needs and how to deal with these needs. The development agencies are also helping the zone, like the Development from People to People (DAPP) train new head teachers in school management".

The partnership in the process of capacity building is there to expand district potential through combined forces. But capacity building for the zone officers is equally important because it is important to have the capacity to learn new things. As noted earlier, the zone office is run by a junior staff, whose responsibility is to improve the quality of education in schools, service delivery in schools and the coordination of development projects. Hence it is important for the district education office and other development partners to build the capacity of the zone.

All the four head teachers (EA1a, EA1b, EA2a, and EA2b) pointed out that capacity building is an important exercise in schools because teaching demands are changing. They remarked that because teachers were trained at different times and have different understanding of teaching methods, they need to be updated every now and then. There has been in-service school training on the use of teaching and learning materials, and teaching methods.

The challenge for the district education office is learning to respond effectively to disparities in the capacity building activities in the different zones as well as different schools.

4.3.3.5 DISTRICT MONITORING AND SUPERVISION

School monitoring and supervision by the district education office is a priority according to the district education manager (EA):

> "Monitoring is a priority for quality of education purposes, because one can not be assured of quality of education, without monitoring and supervision of the system. The monitoring by the district education office

> is through the zone and is scheduled to take place at least once every month. Then once a term, the whole district inspection team is expected to visit schools in the district".

School monitoring, according to director of planning, is very important and district education office keeps a close eye on the success of the exercise which is expected to report to the headquarters about the situation on the ground and what has been done. This inspection can be a positive approach to promote quality of education in the district, but the challenge is the availability of resources to support the exercise to improve quality.

The district school inspection is also a way of checking the education advisors' work done each school term. This can encourage education advisors to work hard and visit all schools in the zone before the district inspection. Although this may be affected by factors like 'who is inspecting who?' in this arrangement, an education advisor inspects a fellow education advisor. In this sense, the district education leadership needs to find a better way of inspecting the work of education advisors.

All the head teachers (EA1a, EA1b, EA2a, and EA2b) interviewed indicated that they were monitored and supervised by primary school advisors as well as by the whole team of primary school advisors once in a while. The monitoring focused on academic activities, such as curriculum implementation and teaching and learning through teacher observation. With management, they look at how the school is looked after. This inspection exercise has been helpful to schools, according to the head teacher (EA2b):

> "When the report from inspection revealed that the teachers and learners are coming late, and suggested that everybody must be made aware that coming late is wrong, and the sensitization must go to parents. As a result the issue of coming late is a thing of the past".

These remarks revealed something worrying, that is, this school management feels so powerless that they have to wait for the primary school advisor to report that the school has developed a 'late coming' culture. This suggests the need to

strengthen the competency level of head teachers through some education management courses, as pointed by the director of planning.

Attempts to bring back the culture of hard work at school are encouraging, but suggest that some teachers do not behave professionally and/or do not follow the rules at work. Coming to school late might also reveal something deeper, such as resistance to increasing workload due to shortage of teachers which all head teachers interviewed reiterated. The district education office is under pressure as the headquarters are expecting quality results while the zone and schools are waiting for teachers.

4.3.4 EFFECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALISATION

4.3.4.1 POSITIVE EFFECTS

The findings from the district (A) indicate that decentralisation has had positive effects on some of the district education office operations. According to the district education manager for district (EA):

> "Decentralisation has brought a new life in my work because now what I plan to do, I achieve it. The attitude toward work by people working at the district education office has changed and motivates us to do more for the district"

And further:

> "By developing our own plans and have them funded we are more motivated to achieve the planned goals".

This response reveals a positive attitude towards, and commitment to, the success of the implementation of decentralisation. How much is really achieved is difficult to assess because of the lack of agreed measure and criteria to assess the success of district decentralisation. Also, it is not easy to measure decentralisation because it takes different forms in different situations. One way could be to compare the current developments to the previous situation and

understand what districts have achieved in terms of quality support and monitoring of schools.

The district education office focuses its direct support role by providing schools with resources. Most of the work of school supervision, monitoring and training is handled by the zones as they are situated closer to schools. The district education office advises the zones and examines their monthly reports.

The two primary education zone advisors (EA1 and EA2) indicated that they are motivated to work and are inspired by the availability of resources, like motor cycles, fuel, and training and this make them enjoy the work. Also, they said they know what and how to interact with schools. The head teachers (EA1a, EA1b, EA2a and EA2b) confirmed that they were motivated by the availability of resources and support provided by the zone office.

The availability of the resources coming with district decentralisation appears an important motivating factor. As Dyer and Rose (2005: 106) and Work (2002: 4) pointed, decentralisation has the advantage of promoting greater responsiveness and availability of local resources. It is also praised for bringing people together to work for school projects and for motivating school staff to work hard because they are provided more efficiently with what they need for teaching and learning.

So it is the district education office's responsibility to sustain the positive attitude demonstrated by the zones and primary schools. The major challenge for the district leadership is to find relevant resources, develop and maintain network with development partners and coordinate all these activities in the district for the success of decentralisation.

4.3.4.2 OBSTACLES

Notwithstanding the substantial, motivating factor of decentralisation, it does not come without some potential obstacles. It is therefore important to have a clear understanding of such obstacles so that appropriate preventive measures can be put in place.

The district education manager (EA) said that what frustrates their efforts is to have good plans which cannot be implemented because of a lack of material and human resources. This is mainly because of the headquarters' inability to compensate for the district's shortfall as well as lack of district leadership capacity in planning effectively, taking into consideration the constraints in which the district finds itself.

The work of the zone primary school advisors requires better financial resources because it is done in schools outside offices and not all schools are easily accessible without transport. So when there is no money for fuel, primary school advisors do not go to schools and fail to work according to their plans. These primary school advisors are also expected to produce a typed monthly report to the district, but they are frustrated by the lack of computer knowledge and facilities at the zone office. Being a training centre, the zone lacks resources to conduct sufficient training or implement effectively the programs it planned.

The head teachers (EA1a, EA1b, EA2a and EA2b) indicated that they are also at pain to achieve what they want because of a lack of school resources, and this frustrates teachers who cannot prepare and plan their lessons because they have not sufficient resources to use.

The literature (De Grauwe et al. 2005; Rose 2005 and Work 2002) has pointed to many constraints impeding the implementation of decentralisation. The most important conditions are: lack of trained and capable manpower, as well as

material and financial resources. Human resource capacity is one of the most important conditions for the successful implementation of decentralisation (Elmore, 1993: 49; Hussein, 2004: 107). Thus when the decentralisation process is not well staffed and financed, the system and its stakeholders will be frustrated and the implementation process hindered.

The director of planning pointed out that the preparation and deployment of staff has been a frustrating factor, because districts have either unqualified staff or no staff at all and they need relevant training, so that district, zone and school staff acquires relevant knowledge to assume the devolved functions. As Dyer and Rose (2005: 106) argue, decentralisation requires the lower levels to assume effectively their authority with resources, capacity and leadership. Spillane and Thompson (1997: 185) also note the importance of government commitment in preparing the local authorities to assume responsibility.

The district manager argued that the lack of headquarters support is frustrating and demoralizing. Every time the district office asked the Ministry for support like school maintenance and rehabilitation, they are referred to the assembly, which is not able to raise further monies from the district revenue collection. The main reason for this lack of assistance by political district assembly to districts is that most district assemblies' political committees have not been operating since 2005. The councilors are no longer available in the assembly and yet they are the ones who frame the district by-laws and represent the different wards in the assembly. Thus, because of poor commitment by political leaders, district assemblies operate without elected members.

Although the intent in Malawi was to have political and administrative decentralisation, this was not sustained. As Falleti (1999: 327) argues, the three forms of decentralisation (administrative, political and financial) are needed to supplement one another. The sequence of having the political form of decentralisation first enables the implementation of the other decentralisation

forms, because these political authorities can then use their devolved powers to bargain for more and ensure that district decentralisation does not accentuate inequalities.

4.4 DISTRICT B

4.4.1 DISTRICT PROFILE

District (B) is situated in the southern region of Malawi and falls under the shire highland education division. It is bordered in the South and East by Mozambique; and Thyolo and Phalombe districts to the North and West. Despite being situated away from cities, the district has average socio-economic status; ensuing from its viable tea estates, which provide employment to most households in the district. The main source of income is tea farming which employs the greater part of the population. The farming of tea, which is sold in local and international markets, makes district (B) economically better than district (A).

Table 9 District Assembly (B) Profile

	Assembly member	Number
1	Government departments	11
2	Members of Parliament	9
3	Non-Government organisation	6
4	Traditional Authority chiefs	6
5	Population density per sq/km	208

(Source: District assembly annual report 2006)

Table 9 shows that district (B) has an assembly with a total membership up to 32 members. The number of government offices is lower compared to those of district (A) considering the engaged nature of the district. Since most of the land is tea plantation, other departments have very little to do in the district. There less NGOs in this district than in (A) and this is orchestrated by the socio-economic indicators of district (B) which place it on a relatively higher and better position.

But this situation does not benefit decentralisation because according to Spillane and Thompson, (1997: 199) decentralisation needs support from partners to generate social capital through networking for the benefit of district development.

DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE

The district (B) education office is located in the Eastern part of the district. It is a very small building attached to the shire highland education division offices. The district education office has also a serious shortage of sufficiently trained staff (see table 10). The reason for the shortage of staff is that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has not filled the vacant positions in the district education office, in line with staff establishment. This means the devolved roles and responsibilities may not have somebody to execute them, culminating in the district education office inability to effectively perform its expected functions. Davies *et al* (2003: 139) and Dyer and Rose (2005: 106) argue that successful implementation of decentralisation need capacity building to strengthen human capital. It is the main challenge of the district education leadership to mobilize and find the necessary resources.

Table 10 District (B) Education Office Staffing

	OFFICE	OFFICER
1	District education manager	1
2	Deputy district education officer	0
3	Desk officer	1
4	Senior primary advisor	1
5	Planning Officer	0
6	Principal human resources officer	0
7	Principal accountant	0

(Sources: District education office staff list 2007)

Table 11 District (B) Education Statistics

	ITEM	2006	2005	2004
1	Education zones	13	13	13
2	Primary schools	165	158	149
3	Teachers	1293	1370	1395
4	Learners	136580	126336	123674
5	Teacher/ learner ratio.	1:105	1:92	1:89
6	Classroom	1289	1235	1170
7	Classroom/learner ratio	1:115	1:114	1:114

(Source: Basic Education Statistics 2004-2006 MoE)

Table 11 suggests that in district (B) the number of primary schools is increasing every year, which resonates with development discourses because it improves accessibility to education in the district. This is an indication of the supportive role by the school communities, NGOs and tea estates. There has been an increase in the number of learners every year (a 8% rise in two years) (see table 11), which derives from the increased number of schools and the supportive role played by the estates, which are no longer employing young boys and girls. There is also a school feeding program, which has attracted learners to school. The pressure is on the district to ensure that the increased number of learners is sustained and that targeted interventions on building the material and human resource support are initiated in the poorly performing zones and/or schools.

There is high teacher attrition in district (B) (a drop of 5.6% in two years) (see table 11) at a time when learners have responded well to the call of going back to school. The inability of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to act swiftly and replace teachers when they resign or die is a main cause. The teacher replacement policy needs to be reviewed because such shortage of teachers in schools undermine other commendable efforts taken by different

stakeholders, such as building of school blocks and taking learners back to schools. The teacher/learner ratio in the district stands at 1:105. This reflects a big challenge to the district leadership for the decentralisation process, as well as education headquarters to compensate the district disparities.

There is a steady increase in the number of permanent classrooms blocks followed by a gradual decrease in the number of temporary classrooms. The construction of classroom blocks in the district means learners have sustainable structures for learning at all season. The steady rise in the number of classrooms is, according to the district education office, a demonstration of what Spillane et al call “social capital” in the district, namely using the networking established to address the classroom shortage through different development partners. But these structures require maintenance and the district needs to budget for the maintenance and sustainability of the buildings.

DISTRICT ZONES

District (B) has 13 zones from which two were sampled. The zone (EB1) is situated at the centre of the district (B) and the biggest education zone in the district in terms of schools, teachers and learners. This means there is more work for the primary school advisor since they are expected to visit all the schools in the zone, at least once every school term.

Table 12: Zone (EB1) and (EB2) statistics.

	Zone	School	Teacher	Learners	T/L Ratio
1	EB1	14	198	15316	1:77
2	EB2	9	56	5522	1:98

(Sources: district school statistic 2007)

Zone (EB2) is situated in the north remote side of the district, inside a tea plantation. It has few schools and a big shortage of teachers, resulting in a high

teacher/learner ratio of 1/98. On average, every school has 6 teachers, which is lower that the minimum requirement of eight teachers for a full primary school. The remote locality may contribute to the low number of teachers. If recruitment of teachers was at district level, teachers from the same area would be the right candidates. And would mean no more shortage of teachers.

4.4.2 UNDERSTANDING THE ORIGIN AND AIMS OF DECENTRALISATION IN MALAWI

District (B) has very little information about decentralisation available to its various stakeholders. There is no decentralisation information at the district assembly or district education office. Lack of information about decentralisation, as alluded to by Hussein (2004: 107), hinders preparedness for the stakeholders to take their full responsibility. It appears government depended much on NGOs for advocacy seminars and because district (B) has few NGOs, the number of seminars was limited and the advocacy did not reach the whole district. The district education manager (EB) appears knowledgeable because seminars mostly target managers. A knowledgeable district education manager with unknowledgeable stakeholders is likely to dominate the proceedings of the meetings, since a lack of knowledge limits member participation in any deliberation. Hussein (2004: 107) argues that effective implementation of decentralisation requires the capacity to understand decentralisation. Spillane and Thompson (1997: 187) argue that district capacity depends on the district leadership's ability to learn new ideas and diffuse such ideas to others within the district as well. Consequently, one could argue that the district leadership is responsible for ensuring that various district stakeholders are knowledgeable about decentralisation. But this is not the case in this district.

When asked whether it is ideal to have a decentralised education system, a district education manager (EB) said;

> "In addition to bringing the work close to the community where it belongs, it is important to note that decentralisation promotes efficiency".

The district education manager (EB) seems to understand that decentralisation is about efficiency and that he is expected to lead the district efforts to achieve such efficiency. He also mentioned that decentralisation is an initiative supported by donors who were interested in dealing direct with the local level. He said:

> "Decentralisation was brought to the district with the help of donors who were not coming to the district in the past, so that they should support development activities direct".

It appears the school community in district (B) just expects and waits for assistance from donors. But the challenge for the district is to ensure that these development activities, sponsored by development partners, respond to or align with national programmes and visions. It is important for the district leadership to control and understand the projects to ensure project sustainability.

4.4.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECENTRALISATION PROCESS

4.4.3.1 DISTRICT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The main activity behind decentralisation is the delegation of roles and responsibilities to the lower levels of authority. According to the district education manager (EB):

> "The district education office is responsible for monitoring and supervising teaching and learning, supporting the education zone office and making decision in relation to district administration and finance. But the office has no responsibility over education policy formulation, international representation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and recruitment and discipline of teachers".

The administration of finance gives the district education office opportunities to address district priorities. The main priority appears to ensure quality of education through the monitoring and supervision of teaching and learning as well as coordinate other supporting activities from the zones. It is also important for the district to target more the poor zones and schools to address some of the disparities existing in the district.

The lack of responsibility over issues like teacher recruitment put the district education leadership in a difficult position when making decisions over availability of teachers. The district education manager reiterated the need to have a teacher replacement responsibility at district level. This shows the lack of specific decentralisation goal for education, because control over teachers would empower the district leadership and make them accountable.

The education zone office makes decisions on behalf of district and Ministry of Education Science and Technology. It appears the zone office has been empowered to make decisions in response to the observations made during inspection. As an information centre for district and headquarters planning activities, the zone office stands out to be an important structure in the education system. The primary school education advisors (EB1 and EB2) confirmed that their main role is to support both schools and school community on education at school level and school development at community level. This creates pressure on zone office to provide the schools and the community with relevant assistance and resources which can only be supplied by education headquarters. At the same time, education headquarters expect zones to work according to nation wide standards. The demands by headquarters are often made without considering the resources available to the zone

While the responsibilities devolved to the zone are crucial, the scale and requirements for the post of education advisors are very low. Yet, the literature (Hussein, 2004: 107 and Bray, 1985: 184) emphasises the need to have competent and knowledgeable human resources if decentralisation is to be successful and effective.

According to McGinn and Welsh (1999: 24), effective decentralisation of education needs to result in better support to schools. According to a head teacher (EB1b), their main responsibility and concern is learning progress of learners. The schools get assistance from the zone office and district office. The

assistance has never been sufficient and, in addition, neither the zone nor the district offices have the authority over acquisition of materials for schools.

4.4.3.2 DISTRICT DECISION MAKING

Decentralisation can promote the involvement of stakeholders in decision making through deliberations or consultations (Dyer and Rose, 2005: 107). There is demonstration of sufficient consultation in this district education office. The district education manager (EB) said;

> "District education office makes decisions through regular meetings to discuss developments and new challenges. Administrative decisions are made through management meetings which are held every Tuesday morning involving administrators. There are also professional meetings every fortnight involving all education advisors for professional decisions".

As alluded to earlier, the number of members attending district meetings or being consulted is vital for the success of democratic participation and efficiency of the deliberation. But the shortage of staff at district office does not allow much consultation. This is not the case with this district, where decisions are sometimes made by three or two members. This indicates the disparity in the districts of staff shortage which Ministry head quarters have to address.

Decisions pertaining to the work taking place in the zone are made in consultation with school head masters and zone community leaders.

The school decisions are also made in consultation with head teachers and deputy heads, in liaison with the school management team, made up of the departmental heads and senior teachers. Head teacher (EB1a) said:

> "The decisions made at school level involve teachers, learners, school committee chairperson, parents and the zone primary school advisor".

There is a demonstration of consultation during school decision making. There is both horizontal consultation with the school community as well as vertical consultation with the zone office. It appears as there is a positive work

relationship between schools and the zone office, which is sometimes derailed by failure of the district office to supply relevant resources. This puts pressure on the district when it has to supply the zones and schools with relevant resources for better teaching and learning.

4.4.3.3 DISTRICT AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT (SUPPORT AND FUNDRAISING)

Apart from the government monthly subvention, the district (B) receives its money from donor funds. The trend in the district is to rely on donors to develop the schools in the district. The district education manager (EB) said:

> "The district assembly has no development budget, 90% of the development projects in the district are donor-funded. The decision on which projects to work on depends on what the donors are interested to address in the district. But most of the donors support the district education office as a response to the proposal they submitted for assistance".

Because NGOs are supporting the district in different sectors including in education, there seems to be very little the district education office is doing to initiate school development activities. This lack of district initiatives could be a reflection of dependence problem on donors or of poor district leadership. As the district education manager (EB) mentioned, donors were partly behind bringing decentralisation to the district to enable them to direct work at district level.

Support to the zone must go through the district office because the district leadership is expected to have control over all the projects in the district and is supposed to have authority, make decisions, direct and coordinate tasks in line with the district development goals. Development projects initiated without district consultation can undermine the district leadership. The primary school advisor (EB2) added:

> "Support from most donors come to the zone through the district office, and we are briefed about the developments. But, in some cases support found its way into the zone without consultation. The main support projects

> on record are building of schools and teachers' houses and provision of learning material".

It is important for the district leadership to ensure that donors support projects, which are in line with the national agenda and answer the national priority concerns as well as to understand and own the donor-funded projects in order to ensure that such projects can be sustained.

District assemblies have different potentials to raise fund as well as different manners of fundraising. It appears that many district assemblies are not sufficiently prepared to take the responsibility to fundraise for the district activities. The district leadership has the responsibility of making the district staff competent in writing proposals to fundraise from donors. District leadership should refer to all these responsible officers in the district office, as, according to Spillane and Thompson (1997: 189), district education manager alone can not be expected to do all what district education office requires. District (B) has no plans to fundraise beyond donors.

This failure to initiate fund raising activities is also experienced at the zone level in this district. The only fundraising initiative on record is the renting out of classrooms by one head teacher in district B. The head teacher (EB2a) said:

> "The fundraising that is done at this school is the renting out of classrooms to those conducting wedding, church meetings and private commercial schools they use classrooms in the afternoon and during week ends".

The overall impression is that there is no sufficient knowledge about fundraising in the district. There is a need to have district and school leaders trained, so that they can initiate fundraising projects for district and school development. It is the leadership responsibility to make sure the staff is given relevant information. A few schools manage to secure additional support, not from the district but from a reliance on their own resources or the school community to finish projects. The head teacher (EB1a) said:

> "At this school, there is a feeding program, the kitchen was built by the parents and when the donor withdrew from the feeding program when the project was over, the school community continued".

The community at school EB1a demonstrates its commitment towards development by taking responsibility over the school feeding program and using the kitchen as an activity in the area for the benefit of the community.

There is a need for the district education leadership to make a deliberate effort towards changing people's attitude towards self initiated development projects, rather than falling back on donors all the time.

4.4.3.4 DISTRICT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building is one of the main driving forces for the success of implementation of decentralisation. According to McGinn and Welsh (1999: 24), effective decentralisation of education needs strengthened capacities and leadership, which provides support through professional development. The level of understanding of most stakeholders about decentralisation and its challenges needs upgrading for them to participate successfully in the decentralisation process

Capacity building programmes are needed to strengthen the level of competences of district staff for successful implementation of decentralisation. The district education manager (EB) mentioned the need to have knowledgeable staff. Requests for training is made to development donors every year by the district education office, but the budget constraints limit the district plans of conducting training as expected. The district education office required training in two areas, one for short upgrading courses, and another for advanced courses in specific subjects such as accounting.

Some education NGOs are supporting the district as development partners in different sectors. The district education manager (EB) acknowledges the role of

NGOs in capacity building, which has helped participation during deliberation and decision making regarding development activities. However, the district education manager also pointed the limitation of NGOs in that they address the issues and activities that related to their programs. In a situation where the NGOs are few like in district (B), many important issues are left unattended. The district leadership faces the challenge of ensuring that all development activities in the district align with the national agenda and not the NGO agendas.

Capacity building also takes place at the zone training centre for junior teachers in need of upgrading qualifications, and senior teachers in need of updating themselves with new methodologies and contents**.** This means the education zones benefited teachers, head teachers as well as school community in the zone who need to be informed and updated on recent developments. The district leadership challenge is to make sure that the zone and primary school capacity building activities do not divert from the national agenda as this could lead to standard fragmentation. Hence capacity building for the zone officer is important and district education office and development partners need to act on it.

4.4.3.5 DISTRICT MONITORING AND SUPERVISION

School monitoring and supervision is essential to the achievement of quality education in the district. According to the district education manager (EB), the monitoring and supervision command a bigger portion of the district's operation budget (about half), which is indicative of the importance attached to the school's monitoring and supervisory activities.

The monitoring arrangements contend that, the zones' primary education advisors have to visit every school in the zone at least once every school term. This is followed by the district inspection team, where all advisors in the district accompanied by the district education manager visit schools together once every term as a way of checking the work done by primary school advisors and

compare it with their monthly reports. The difficult issue, which the district leadership must address, is how one set of advisors checks or moderates what another set of advisors does.

Head teachers (EB1a, EB1b, EB2a and EB2b) said that monitoring is happening more frequently and intensively than before. Schools are encouraged by the presence of education advisors because they point issues which the school management does not always see. The challenge is on the implementation of the recommendations of monitoring and inspection teams because there are not sufficient resources in the zone and district education offices. The district education office leadership is therefore under constant pressure to provide the resources needed to support schools to implement the inspection recommendations.

4.4.4 EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALISATION

4.4.4.1 POSITIVE EFFECTS

The district education manager (EB) applauded decentralisation for making his work easier:

> "We are encouraged by the resources support from Ministry headquarters and the reporting system to the same Ministry headquarters".

There are more activities taking place in the district education office because of their resources. The reporting system is instituted for different reasons, but, in this case it has motivated the district education office to work hard, so as to have something to report.

The primary school advisors (EB1 and EB2) confirmed that the availability of resources and the commitment of the zone to work hard motivate them. The head teachers (EB1a, EB1b, EB2a and EB2b) applauded the availability of books

as well as regular visits by the zone officer, as an important source of motivation in their respective schools.

The availability of relevant material resources and the work relationship between different levels in the district has contributed to a positive experience of decentralisation to the district. Since resources appear to be a big motivating factor, the district leadership needs to provide schools with relevant resources.

4.4.4.2 OBSTACLES

The district education manager (EB) mentioned that, because they have no authority to source materials or recruit staff in the district, they suffer from an inadequacy of material and human resources. The poor headquarters support is frustrating the district education office, which blamed headquarters for not delivering what they promise. This suggests poor commitment on the part of ministerial headquarters.

The zone also suffers a lack of resources, especially transport to go around the zone. The zone training centre needs also to provide more training to schools, but lack of resources to do it properly.

Head teachers (EB1a, EB1b, EB2a and EB2b) complained about the shortage of teachers and classrooms as the most frustrating factors because learners don't have a teacher per class. This made many head teachers organize two groups of learners, one coming early and the other coming late so that the same teachers can teach separately those two groups in the same classrooms. Teachers do this double-shift/session without additional remuneration and this antagonizes them.

The preparation and deployment of staff has been a frustrating factor, because districts have either unqualified staff or not enough staff. This all points to the fact that, when the decentralisation process is not well financed or supported, the

system and the stakeholders are frustrated and the implementation process is hindered. Human resource capacity has been pointed by several writers (Elmore 1993: 49; Hussein 2004: 106; and Dyer and Rose 2005: 107) to play an important role in the success of decentralisation implementation. Elmore (1993: 49) pointed that the success or failure of decentralized system is dependent on the lower level assuming its authority and functions, which depends on its resources, capacity and leadership. Dyer and Rose (2005: 109) pointed the need for government commitment to empower the local authority to assume responsibility.

Another problem is the lack of political commitment which has frustrated the district assembly activities. Indeed, the assembly committees do not have the political power to mobilize people and development partners.

Leadership involves the possibility to exercise authority, take decisions, and to direct and coordinate tasks relevant to the organisation. (Spillane and Thompson, 1997: 187). From this definition, most of the problems experienced in the implementation of decentralisation seem to point to the leadership's failure to plan, direct and coordinate decentralisation activities.

4.5 SUMMARY

The data presented here reflect the ideas, perceptions and experiences of the respondents as provide by them during the interviews. These data were then aggregated according to the workplaces of the respondents and categorised in a way that reflects the sum total of views expressed on matters related to implementation of education decentralisation.

Most respondents have indicated in varying degrees that decentralisation is a complex and demanding phenomenon. Respondents have also indicated that decentralisation is a long process, which involves different stakeholders and development partners. It is clear to them that decentralisation requires

commitment, patience, and dedication on the part of stakeholders and development partners. This is probably part of the reason why, implementation has been derailed than expected.

Respondents highlighted the background and expectations of decentralisation as promoting development and efficacy. They repeatedly pointed that there is need for stakeholders to have an understanding of the concept, policy content and management of implementation of decentralisation. This means that stakeholders should have access to relevant information and knowledge which is fundamental in the development of range of skills and competencies needed to deal with the complex tasks involved in decentralisation. Most respondents also welcomed the devolution of power as a positive move towards development. The possibility to make decisions at the local/community level, draw budget and received the budgeted allocation is a big motivating factor.

The implementation of decentralisation outlines the shared responsibilities between headquarters, district, zone and primary school. As a process of devolution of responsibility every level has a role to play. One important function allocated to district is school development, which involves school block and teachers' houses construction, maintenance, rehabilitation, and improvement of infrastructure. The headquarters, it was mentioned, only help soliciting possible donors. Districts execute this function by writing development proposals for support from stakeholders and development partners. This is happening at district, zone as well as at primary school level.

Headquarter respondents said that the devolution of powers process was taking too long, and was discouraging while most respondents felt that the lack of relevant resources to execute the devolved responsibilities was the biggest demoralizing factor.

The importance of capacity and capacity building was emphasized by all respondents. This confirms the outcry about the complexity and demanding in decentralisation implementation. The advocacy, short courses and the putting of pre-requisites for one to fill a specific position are some of the means deployed to make sure that the problem of capacity is under control. However, respondents also mentioned that, although some advocacy was done by NGOs, they are not detailed enough to respond to the operation challenges of decentralisation. It was also pointed out that the support received from other stakeholders and development partners is a big motivating factor to make sure decentralisation succeeds.

The following chapter evaluates the implementation of decentralisation in the two sampled district and the challenges of decentralisation.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALISATION

This chapter deals with the evaluation of the implementation of decentralisation in two districts. It categorizes the main implementation challenges of decentralisation. The role of district education office finds expression in this chapter because it is the pivot of education decentralisation in Malawi. The role of district leadership is more especially discussed in relation to effectiveness.

5.1 DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALISATION

Because the study sampled two districts, this section will compare the similarities and differences between them as far as the impact of the implementation of decentralisation is concerned.

District (A) has a very low socio-economic status and high population density with farming as the main source of income. This district has few resources to support community initiated developments. However, because it is one of the pilot districts for the implementation of decentralisation, it has attracted a number of NGOs which may have influenced the community to assist and participate in school development activities. In comparison, district (B) has an average socio-economic status because of the tea estates which provide employment to most households. There are fewer NGOs and fewer government departments than in district (A). The tea estates also support development activities in the district. There is also very little community initiated development activities in the district, which has a 90% dependence on donors for school development activities.

The district education leadership from the two districts is confronted with different challenges regarding education development. District (A)'s local community

appears to be more committed to development activities than district (B), which has 90% of the activities in the district projects donor-funded. District (A) has a community with self reliant attitude where the leadership needs to motivate and sustain this attitude with capacity building. District (B) has to change the dependence attitude of its communities to self reliance, by starting with capacity building.

District (A) is reported to experience an acute shortage of administrative staff and teachers. This is due to a failure of headquarters to deploy relevant staff to district offices and schools. This situation has affected the district education office operations as well as primary school operations. The district education office also reported a shortage of materials for teaching and learning. District (B) is experiencing almost the same situation as district (A) with shortage of relevant staff and relevant materials. The situation has created tensions in the implementation of decentralisation activities because work is not done properly owing to the lack of human and material resources. This show how important the political and financial commitment by education headquarters is if decentralisation is to yield benefits for schools. The only alternative for the districts is to use its strategic leadership to know how best to operationalise the compensation for staff and resource shortages.

District (A) has been operating without the political arm of the assembly, which means they do not have district assembly by-laws. This has affected the plans of the district assembly, especially when it wants to change certain by-laws such as revenue collection and fund raising. This has also reduced the number of assembly members and the representation of the community in the assembly. District (B) experiences the same situation, as it is operating without elected ward councilors. This means that the sharing of responsibilities amongst the two arms of the district assembly has not been possible and it is only the administrative part of the assembly which is operating. Yet headquarters expect the district to

deliver by using its political arm. This puts pressure on the district leadership to work harder and find other ways of delivering to meet headquarters' expectation.

Two districts have more similarities than differences, more especially in their lack of resources and support from headquarters. This situation has hindered the pace of implementation of decentralisation in the districts.

5.2 PROFILE OF IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES.

Leadership has been reported by Spillane, (2005: 343) as critical in developing and sustaining new policies like decentralisation. For this reason, this section describes the kind of leadership efforts expected for the success of implementation of decentralisation. According to Fullan (2005: 176) leadership at district level must be contextualized to speak to roles and responsibilities. This means leadership needs to be framed by taking account of the fact that Malawian education is in a process of reconstruction and change with the implementation of the decentralisation policy. It is important for the district leadership to bring a sense of hope and possibility to rekindle a sense of working together to bring about transformation as well as to instill confidence and change the expectation that solutions must come from outside.

Another important challenge is that decentralisation can only work and yield benefits of efficiency and effectiveness when local governments and authorities are held accountable. For this accountability to work, clear delineation of authority, responsibility, transparent and understandable information are required.

5.2.1 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The literature agrees that quality leadership is a major ingredient for education effectiveness and improvement because leaders are central to the decision

making process and are key players in such transformation initiatives (Davidoff and Lazarus 2002: 167). Leadership in this study is understood as those exercising authority, taking decisions, as well as directing and coordinating tasks relevant to the institutional goals. Implementation of decentralisation is often being challenged by the failure of the system to support and promote the success of the decentralisation implementation process. This shows that, if leadership can plan according to the situation of decentralisation, the obstacles would not be there (Fullan 2005: 176).

In the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, director of planning, district education managers, primary school advisors and head teachers, have all some formal authority by virtue of their positions. The decisions they make affect peoples' lives, create a positive climate that affects the education community and project a certain philosophy and practical vision that propels education forwards. In this case study, leadership may be better described as the capacity of the Ministry and district team, to guide the education system in an agreed strategic and developmental direction.

Leadership has to understand the process and take time to organize and develop the capacity for more effective implementation. The lack of relevant information about decentralisation during the current implementation of decentralisation suggests that leadership was not well organized or prepared when the implementation process was instituted. The preparation, as Dyer and Rose (2005: 107) argue, consists in having qualified staff and relevant material, as it is the leadership obligation to secure them to ensure proper planning and implementation. This is where social capital or the capacity to find partners through networking is important as the leadership needs to increase its resources and capacity.

Thus, since decentralisation involves different stakeholders, leadership has to work in concert with different constituencies and agencies. Because the latter will

have different visions of decentralisation, the leadership must develop a clear vision and plans of action to guide the involvement of these different partners.

The decentralisation policy in Malawi did not include a proper staff deployment process and this caused a serious crisis. It is therefore the duty of leadership to come up with ways of addressing this staff shortage. It needs to formulate a policy and strategy, which will enable the office to recruit and fill all vacancies with qualified staff.

Decentralisation goes in phases and steps, and the delegation of responsibility has to be gradual in line with the experience acquired. Thus, the leadership is expected to plan the challenge of capacity building of under qualified staff and resources supply concurrently. If this happens, then the implementation of decentralisation will be complete and the relevant stakeholders will all be competent enough to sustain the process, even when external support disappears.

The situation experienced in the two sampled district education offices put the leadership of these education offices in a challenging situation. The tasks of organizing support and monitoring of teaching and learning (task oriented) and the strong working relationship among people in the whole district (relation oriented) are the two main responsibilities of the district education office and should challenge the existing leadership behaviour and style. The situation in the district education office seems to favour the task oriented approach (with some support for teaching and learning) than the relationship-oriented (people's welfare) approach. The leadership has to find a way of harnessing both the task- and relationship-approaches for the successful implementation of decentralisation process.

5.2.2 ACCOUNTABILITY

Advocates of decentralisation justify decentralisation on the grounds of increased efficiency, greater participation and responsiveness of government to citizens. Accountability is an intrinsic part of decentralisation as it ensures that efficiency is pursued by the lower levels. This means that decentralisation needs some clarification about the goals to be achieved and the criteria to measure the performance as it will make accountability clearer. The incompleteness and failure to have clear guidelines for decentralisation may contribute to a situation where the stakeholders to whom authority is devolved are never held accountable.

The current education decentralisation process has delineated a channel of distribution and reporting of activities at different levels. The challenge remains the competences and authorities of the different levels of the education system to ensure that accountability is practiced in good faith, and does not just fulfill the legislative requirements of the system.

The district education office has the powers to develop plans and is responsible for the implementation of education decentralisation policy. So it has to be accountable for the use of these powers. But it seems as if there is no specific mechanism in place for evaluating the district performance and for making it accountable for what it achieves. Given the current shortage of staff and resources, districts will use this as an excuse for not being able to deliver as expected.

At the moment, the district office accounts by preparing and submitting monthly reports to the district assembly and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. But there is no indication as to whether the reporting is for accountability requirements or for justifying the following month's government

subvention. So there is a need to have a reporting system from districts, that is specifically designed for accountability purposes.

The head teachers interviewed indicated that they are responsible for teaching and learning, which mean that their most important accountability lies with the children. They are accountable to provide education to the satisfaction of the learners and the community, and yet they are being hindered by lack of qualified staff and resources. The lack of sufficient resources should appear to school leadership as a challenge because they are supposed to develop alternative strategies to compensate for shortages in resources.

Accountability according to Anderson (2003: 10) is a tool for holding officials at all levels accountable for progress towards national goals. So Ministry headquarters and district offices should all be held accountable. There is need to create what is called pressure and support (Fullan, 2005: 175) or rather, in this situation, a balance between support and pressure so that these support and pressure strategies result in more effective accountability with consequences.

5.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have compared the two districts' implementation of education decentralisation. The districts differ slightly in their economical status, availability of development resources, community involvement in development projects, availability of staff, availability and influence of development partners and how leadership is dealing with these situations.

The two implementation challenges, leadership and accountability, were discussed in relation to the development and sustainability of new policies like decentralisation. It is clear that leadership is needed to bring hope and possibility to rekindle a sense of working together to bring about transformation as well as confidence and change the expectations that solutions can only come from outside. All this boils to the fact that competent leadership is a critical ingredient

for improvement because leaders are central to decision making. There is a need to balance the leadership in terms of task-oriented approach and human relation-approach for the successful implementation of education decentralisation.

There is also an accountability challenge which is needed if district decentralisation is to promote efficiency. Certain competencies and authority at different levels of the system are needed to ensure that work and accountability are done in good faith and not only to fulfil legislative requirements. So accountability has to be used as a tool for holding officials at all levels accountable for progress towards national goals.

The final chapter provides the researcher's views on the findings with some recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the researcher's interpretation of the findings. This is done with reference to the literature which is relevant to make appropriate comments on the findings. The study gathered interesting information about how the implementation of decentralisation has tried to weather the storm of the various decentralisation challenges. In Malawi, this has been partly made possible because of the support from donors and development partners at different levels.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology remains committed to granting district education offices the authority to run education. The Ministry believes that gradual transfer of the responsibility for education finance and administration to the district will leave it with the sole responsibility of monitoring how the district education office translates input resources into learner performance. Further, the Ministry acknowledges the numerous challenges that districts have in relation to human, material and financial capacity and resources.

This sample case study has reviewed important constructs related to the implementation process of decentralisation. The findings in chapter four intends to answer the research question on: how the decentralisation situation has affected district education office operations and how district education operations have affected primary school operations. The chapter highlights the factors that hinder or promote the implementation of decentralisation as well as the district leadership challenges. Although only two districts were studied, the major factors which emerged are useful indicators of the successes and problems of the implementation of decentralisation as a whole.

The process of devolving responsibilities and functions to districts appears to be an ideal method of increasing participation in education decision making and development. The authority given to the district education office with its specific functions and responsibilities appears to have a positive effect on some of the district operations. Stakeholders' attitude towards education decentralisation is positive as they are motivated by the willingness of districts and donor support.

The decentralisation process has pre-conditions which are important to acknowledge. The common pre-conditions are; staff and leadership capacity, stable political system, commitment by government and the sequence of implementation of the different dimensions of decentralisation. The staff and leadership capacity is critical in developing and sustaining successful implementation of decentralisation.. The success of the implementation of decentralisation depends in this case on strong leadership and staff capacity at all levels. All the two districts visited demonstrated low capacity of staff and leadership at all levels.

A stable political system creates a stable government committed to transfer authority and resources to district level. This enables the district to assume the devolved roles and responsibilities. The decentralisation process in this study is hampered by partial devolution of responsibilities by head quarters which appear not ready to completely devolve responsibilities to district level.

The sequence in the form of decentralisation is a pre-condition, where the sequences appear to be; political decentralisation first, then fiscal and finally administrative form. Malawi appears to have combined administrative and political forms of decentralisation. But in the past two years, the political form has not existed because of the absence of elected councilors in the district assemblies. There is very little of fiscal form decentralisation because a financial responsibility appears to be strongly centralised.

While the existing literature suggests that, with decentralisation, development is experienced, the two districts under investigation did not demonstrate such developments. They did not have the expected development experience because of many different barriers and the absence of important pre-conditions for effective decentralisation. At district level, the extensive preparations required for the successful implementation of decentralisation were lacking. Moreover, the mandatory adoption of the national decentralisation policy could have affected the effective implementation of education decentralisation. The devolution of role and responsibilities has unequivocally resulted in changing roles for districts. The few staff members in the district, in addition to varied levels of training and competencies of staff at all levels, make the effective implementation of decentralisation difficult. Thus, it appears as If the poor district capacity and resources did not meet enough minimum conditions before being entrusted with the responsibility of taking charge of district education.

It is interesting that this study indicates that decentralisation is well accepted as a principle by the respondents. Some respondent went as far as praising it as the best way of dealing with school community development. Given the fact that districts have been operating in a centralised system, the sustaining of decentralisation in district can only happen with more advocacy, training, resources, capacity and competences to assume effectively these new roles.

RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study cannot be generalized but they indicate some trends which could lead to some recommendations for the improvement of the decentralisation process. Different stages of decentralisation need to be regarded as distinct processes for effective planning and execution of education decentralisation. The initial stage of advocacy needs to be carefully undertaken. The allocation and provision of appropriate resources and training is a long and

ongoing process. Setting up monitoring and feedback procedures to assess the relevant and effectiveness of the phenomenon is also important.

The building of partnership between different stakeholders is important to link different capacities to equip officials to handle new responsibilities or commitments to improve education.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study, like many others before, has found that decentralisation, in its infancy stage, is constrained by a lack of human and material resources. It is therefore recommended that further research be done on how certain districts manage to build their leadership, capacity and resources during the decentralisation process. It would also be interesting to examine the findings of a similar study conducted with a larger sample, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

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APPENDICES-INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

1 MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS QUESTIONNAIRE

Director of planning

In trying to get the information about the origin, purpose, the form and the procedures of implementation of education decentralisation nation wide the following questions will be used.

1. Where does the idea of decentralizing education authority to district education office for the running of primary schools come from? What do you think about it?
2. What are the aims of education decentralisation to district level? What is your view on the decentralisation?
3. What are the main responsibilities decentralized to the district office? Do you think responsibilities are too much or too little?
4. What are the main challenges for the district education office to assume its responsibilities effectively?
5. How does the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology support district education office, what type of support and which particular area?
6. How are district education offices funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology? Are there specials funds for poor districts?
7. How does the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology monitor the district education office work, operations, performance and what criteria are used?
8. What have you learnt from monitoring the work of different districts since inception of educational decentralisation?
9. Has education decentralisation changed the nature of the work of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in what way?

10. What are the factors that have helped the performance of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology since decentralisation?
11. What factors undermine the performance of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology since decentralisation?
12. Does the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology receive support in relation to decentralisation from other agencies, what kind of support and who decided on the type of support?

2. DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE QUESTIONNAIRE

District Education Manager

In order to get information about the district education office operations in a decentralised administrative system, the following questions will be asked:

1. What are the aims of decentralisation of education responsibilities to the district education office? Why do you think it was decided this way?
2. What are the main responsibilities and decision making authority of the district education office? How does the district education office assume its responsibilities? And what are the main challenges?
3. What are the main decisions made by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology headquarter and district assembly for the district? What are the demands made by schools and how do you prioritize them?
4. What are the priorities of district education office planning? And for the education zones?
5. What are the district education office development priorities in the primary schools?
6. How does the budget for primary schools reflect the district education office plans?
7. What are the priorities in the work that the district education office does with primary schools?
8. Who is responsible for capacity building in the district education office and what areas are the priorities?
9. How does the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology support the district education office, on what and how helpful has it been?
10. How does the district assembly support the district education office, on what and how helpful has it been?
11. How does the district assembly education committee influence district education office operations, on what?

12. What type of support does the district education office receive from other agencies? Who decides on the type of support and how helpful has it been?
13. How do the education zones prioritize their work?
14. How does the district education office support the education zone, on what, with what?
15. How does the district education office monitor the education zone performance, on what and how, and how are the monitoring reports used?
16. What are the management issues in primary schools?
17. What support does the district education office give to primary schools, with what, on what?
18. How does the district education office monitor and evaluate primary school performance, on what? For what purpose?
19. Does the district education office have enough human and financial resources to do its work? What areas are attended to properly and what are those that are not?
20. How does the office perform and what criteria will you use to assess your performance? What are the factors that help and undermine the performance of the district education office?

3. EDUCATION ZONE QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to get information on the support, monitoring and evaluation of primary schools, the following question will be used:

Primary school education advisor

1. How do you make decisions on issues that primary schools expect from the zone office, what decisions do you make?
2. What are the main priorities of the education zone office?
3. How does the district education office support the education zone, on what, with what and how helpful is this support?
4. What other agencies support the education zone office, with what? who decide on what to support ?
5. How do you support primary schools, on what, with what?
6. How does the district education office monitor the education zone office, on what? For what purpose?
7. How do you monitor and evaluate primary schools, on what? And for what purpose?
8. What school management and administration issues are priorities when working with schools?
9. How does the zone perform and what criteria will you use to assess your performance? What conditions promote or undermine the education zone performance?

4. PRIMARY SCHOOL QUESTIONNARE

In order to get information about the school management and administration support, monitoring and evaluation, the following questions will be asked?

Head teacher

1. What are the main responsibilities and decision making authority of the school management and administration at the school?
2. What support does the school management expect from the education zone office?
3. How does the education zone support the school management on what, with what? How helpful?
4. What support does your primary school expect from the district education office?
5. How does the district education office support the school, on what, with what? And how helpful?
6. What support does the school management expect from school committee and the community? And how helpful?
7. How do the school committee and the community support the school, on what, with what? And how helpful?
8. How does other agencies support the school management, with what, who decides on the type of support? And how helpful?
9. What support does the school management expect from the district education office? And how helpful?
10. How do you make decisions on mandates from zone and district education office?
11. How does the education zone office monitor and evaluate the primary school, on what?

12. How is the capacity building program at school level? What are the priories and who is responsible?
13. What support do you request from request from the district education office, what are the priorities?
14. What conditions promote the management and administration at the primary school?
15. What conditions undermines the school management and administration operations and efforts?