

MUSTER

Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project

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Discussion Paper

12

The Malawi Integrated
In-Service Teacher
Education Programme and
its School-based Components

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Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER)

MUSTER is a collaborative research project co-ordinated from the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex Institute of Education. It has been developed in partnership with:

The Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

The Institute of Education, The National University of Lesotho.

The Centre for Educational Research and Training, University of Malawi.

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MUSTER is focused on generating new understandings of teacher education before, during and after the point of initial qualification as a teacher. Its concerns include exploring how new teachers are identified and selected for training programmes, how they acquire the skills they need to teach effectively, and how they experience training and induction into the teaching profession. The research includes analytical concerns with the structure and organisation of teacher education, the form and substance of teacher education curriculum, the identity, roles and cultural experience of trainee teachers, and the costs and probable benefits of different types of initial teacher training.

MUSTER is designed to provide opportunities to build research and evaluation capacity in teacher education in developing countries through active engagement with the research process from design, through data collection, to analysis and joint publication. Principal researchers lead teams in each country and are supported by three Sussex faculty and three graduate researchers.

This series of discussion papers has been created to provide an early opportunity to share output from sub-studies generated within MUSTER for comment and constructive criticism. Each paper takes a theme within or across countries and offers a view of work in progress.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BTC	:	Blantyre Teachers' College
DEO	:	District Education Office
EDMU	:	Education Development and Management Unit
MANEB	:	Malawi National Examination Board
MASTEP	:	Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme
MIITEP	:	Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme
MSSSP	:	Malawi School Support System Project
PEA	:	Primary Education Advisor
TDC	:	Teacher Development Centres
TDU	:	Teacher Development Unit
TTC	:	Teacher Training Colleges
ZINTEC	:	Zimbabwe Integrated National Teacher Education Course

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the school-based component of the MIITEP teacher training programme and discusses how far it is being effectively implemented. The sample for the research was drawn from two training colleges and included tutors, advisors and trainees, as well as headteachers from the schools. The main methods used were structured interviews and focus group discussions. A key conclusion is that the effectiveness of school-based training is heavily dependent on the support of the Teacher Development Unit. Furthermore, there was little evidence of pedagogical approaches encouraged in training being used in schools, and trainees lacked professional support in this area, suggesting the need for more training of headteachers and more coordination between different managers of the school-based programme. On the other hand, the day-to-day experience of working in schools provided an opportunity for concrete learning in relation to lesson planning, classroom management and other skills. It also notes that there tended to be less supervision than might be expected and when it was done it was focused primarily on assessment. Also, zonal workshops were regarded as very useful and assignments and projects, though time-consuming, were seen to be academically engaging. Key recommendations include: a clearer schedule for zonal meetings, supervision and assessment; better resourcing for the managers of school-based training and more collaboration between them; and a need to rationalise the system of country-wide assessment by drawing on the skill and expertise of the Primary Education Advisors in the process of assessment. It also recommends more consideration of the specific needs of women teachers.

CHAPTER 1

THE MALAWI INTEGRATED IN SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME AND ITS SCHOOL-BASED COMPONENT

1.1 Introduction

The Malawi Integrated In-Service Teacher Education Project (MIITEP) course is 2 years long and divided into two major components, namely residential training and school-based training. The residential component consists of 3 months college-based work at the beginning and 6 weeks of revision and examinations at the end. The course is linked to the school-based component which lasts 20 months. This comprises school-based training during which students teach in a primary school and are expected to receive guidance and support from the school and are also expected to get external supervision from Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) and college tutors. In addition students are expected to attend 12 zonal seminars which provide opportunities for students to share experiences. They continue to study the Student-Teacher Handbooks which form the major resource for the course. A distance mode component is also included where students are expected to write 12 assignments and 4 projects and forward them to their colleges for assessment.

To facilitate school-based training and to spearhead professional support earmarked for teachers the Ministry of Education has decentralised some of the functions of the District Education Office to zonal offices. Each District has been divided into zones comprising a given number of schools depending on the demographical and geographical features of the District. All professional support services are to be directed from a zonal centre where the Malawi Schools Support System Project (MSSP) is building Teacher Development Centres (TDC). One PEA who is also a co-ordinator of training activities takes charge of the TDC. Some zones have more than one PEA depending on the number of schools in them. Table 1 shows the number of zones, schools and PEAs per zone in the Districts where this study was conducted. As can be seen these vary from District to District.

Table 1: Number of Zones, PEAs and Schools in Study Districts.

District	No. of zones	No. of PEAs	No. of schools/zone
Blantyre Urban	6	15	5-10
Blantyre Rural	10	14	13-16
Chiradzulu	8	8	10-11
Ntcheu	15	15	11-17
Dedza	13	13	10-21

In some zones there are no PEAs allocated because of shortage of staff. Such zones are termed sub-zones and they are supported by PEAs from other zones. The number of students in a zone also depends on the number of schools in the zone but different

schools have different numbers of students because there has not been a rationalisation of student and qualified teacher allocation to schools.

This monograph explores the activities and experiences of both trainers and the students during school-based training and relates this to the whole MIITEP programme in so far as synchronisation and effectiveness are concerned in the spirit of the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research (MUSTER). The first Chapter documents the MIITEP school-based programme as it was designed. In Chapter 2 we outline the research methods adopted in this study. This includes sampling of districts, zones, schools and students. The conduct of data collection and data analysis is also described in this Chapter. In Chapter 3 we present the findings regarding the activities and experiences of both trainers and students and relates these to what had been designed in the curriculum and programme. Chapter 4 looks at the success of the MIITEP school-based training in relation to international trends and suggests possible remedies to sustain such teacher preparation efforts.

1.1.1 Rationale

School-based training under MIITEP takes 20 out of 24 months of the course. Many activities like training resource persons in various training capacities and providing material support to zones and District Offices have been earmarked for this mode of training. Schools have been entrusted with an enormous task of training students who in many cases out number the qualified teachers present (Kunje and Lewin, 1999). At the same time schools have to grapple with old and familiar problems of lack of teaching and learning materials like books, large pupil enrolments, shortage of classrooms and large dropout and failure rates just to mention a few. The quality of education in Malawi has been described as one of the lowest in the sub-Saharan region. Both external and internal efficiency of the primary school need to be improved and therefore demand concerted efforts by both planners and implementers to address these problems. It is in this arena that MIITEP has entrusted schools with the mammoth task of providing full support and training to students who are in different cohorts while at the same time the system keeps on pouring untrained teachers into the schools. Currently the students and untrained teachers constitute more than 50% of the teaching force and yet schools in such a plight are expected to support MIITEP students (TDU, 1996).

It is thus a matter of interest to both MIITEP and MUSTER to explore the experiences of the schools, the students and external supervisors on how the training at the school is progressing. MIITEP had the opportunity to learn from a previous Malawi Special Distance Teacher Education Programme (MASTEP) course which employed a similar course structure. MUSTER may reveal some of the successes and some of the lost opportunities.

1.1.2 Research Question

This study therefore addresses the issue of how school-based-training is executed and experienced. The study is going to answer the question:

How far are the planned school-based components of the MIITEP programme being implemented with regard to school support, supervision and distance study? To answer this question the study will focus on the following sub-questions:-

1. What is the amount, quality and effectiveness of school-based support and training?
2. What is the amount, quality and effectiveness of external supervision?
3. How is the distance learning component being carried out and what problems have been encountered?

These questions are intended to address the broader question:

“How do student teachers learn to teach?” which represents part of the focus of MUSTER.

1.2 The MIITEP School-Based Training

The MIITEP course provides that after 3 months of college work a student should spend 20 months teaching in school to acquire skills on-the-job. This means that the course is centred around school-based training believing that teaching skills can best be acquired by spending a considerable amount of time in teaching. It is also accepted that the school environment and activities have a big impact on how a trainee acts and behaves professionally. Thus a conducive environment speeds up the acquisition of skills and the acculturation of a trainee into the norms and processes of the teaching profession. On the other hand non-supportive environments tend to slow down the training process and often times instil bad practice which is difficult to shake off even when exposed to positive circumstances later. School-based training is also advocated because it is believed that when a person takes initiative in acquiring knowledge or a skill he or she owns that knowledge or skill and therefore lives in harmony with it under many different circumstances. This means that the knowledge or skill becomes a versatile tool that can be invoked when a situation demands it. However there is one major limiting factor with on- the- job training and this is that not all training locations are similar. In the case of schools in Malawi their states of readiness to support school-based training range from very good schools with a positive ethos to temporary schools with everyone expecting changes at any time. The issue to pursue is whether indeed this range of schools has the baseline support structures to effect a meaningful school-based training under MIITEP.

Apart from the actual teaching or classroom work school-based training is expected to benefit the trainee via school support, internal and external supervision, zonal meetings and the assignments and project write-ups which constitute the distance mode of training. Let us now examine how these may effect the training.

1.2.1 School Support

In a study conducted at the onset of MIITEP, Kunje and Stuart (1996) found that schools in Malawi are capable of organising themselves to support untrained teachers.

According to the study it is possible for the senior management team at a school to arrange some of the following activities without overly disturbing the daily routine of the school.

1. Allocate trainees to standards which are manageable in terms of content and classroom practice.
2. Pair trainees with qualified teachers or pair trainees to work together.
3. Allocate trainees with few subjects at a time rotating the allocation until they experience teaching all subjects. This also gives them time to look at other training needs.
4. Arrange trainee – qualified teacher classroom observation.
5. Arrange internal workshops where qualified teachers and trainees share experiences.
6. Instil a reflective-teacher spirit by introducing the idea of action research.
7. Create a positive school-based training ethos.
8. Involve students in management and community related duties.

A combination of some of these activities have proved effective in Bangladesh where the approach to school management focuses on among other things field work, learner support and regular assessment (Ahmed et al., 1993). The Zimbabwe Integrated National Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) also offers good examples of how head teachers, experienced teachers, district education officers, tutors and others play their roles in school-based training (Ncube, -1982).

In recent times the Malawi School Support Systems Project (MSSSP) has oriented head teachers on school management systems and given professional and material support to PEAs to enable them carry out their roles effectively. At the same time TDU has provided head teachers with forms or checklists which compel them to fulfil tasks which MIITEP demands of them.

The activities described above constitute school environments capable of offering school-based support to trainees which will quickly realise the aims of MIITEP. Some activities may not be possible in different schools due to high teacher: pupil ratios, unavailability of qualified teachers, arduous living conditions of trainees and unsympathetic qualified teachers.

In the case of school-based workshops the head teacher is required to conduct them when there is need at the school. If the head is concerned with the performance of students in particular areas he or she is advised to hold in-house workshops to address those concerns. TDU has provided head teachers with Form B for recording details of the activities at the workshops. The details include:-

1. Date of workshop
2. Duration of workshop
3. Facilitator
4. Topics covered
5. Number of participants
6. Comments on success of workshop

1.2.2 Supervision by head teachers

According to TDU (1996) the role of head teachers in MIITEP is to co-ordinate the activities of MIITEP students at the school and supervise them in their teaching. The head teacher is required to supervise each student at a school at least two times a week. In addition the head teacher is required to assess each student 3 times per term. Forms are provided both to the head teacher and the student which constitute checklists as well as records of supervisory and assessment activities. Every time a head teacher observes and supervises or assesses a student the head teacher records the activity on a checklist. The student does the same in his or her checklist and the head teacher endorses this by signing. Each student is also supposed to keep a record of what the head teacher advised or noted.

In all there are four forms or checklists for the head teacher. The first form is called Student Teacher Supervision Form. Here the head teacher is required to record the following issues:-

1. Student teacher problem/concern
2. Objectives of supervision
3. Observable student behaviour
4. Student improvement goals
5. Instruments used
6. Summary of feedback on strong points, weak points and advice given

The second form is Form B for recording details of workshops conducted. This also provides space for recording or documenting advice given to student teachers by other qualified teachers.

The third form is called Form A: Supervision and Assessment of Teaching Practice. On it head teachers record the name of students whom they have supervised per week. They also record the dates when students were assessed and the grades awarded during teaching practice.

The fourth form is the Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB) Classroom Observation Form. On it head teachers record the evaluation of teaching practice comprising lesson preparation, lesson presentation, classroom management, teacher presentability and up-keep of records.

During supervision the head teacher observes a certain behaviour or practice exhibited by the student either in a classroom situation or any other school environment. Then the head discusses with the student the merits and demerits of this particular behaviour in relation to the teaching profession. Appropriate advice is given and the follow-up visits are made to check if there is any progress made. After a number of such visits and discussions the head teacher may now visit the student to assess the performance usually in form of a grade. In the case of MIITEP the grade is awarded after classroom observation.

These activities constitute school-based teaching practice supervision and assessment by head teachers or their deputies as prescribed by TDU in the Handbook for MIITEP (1996) and the guidelines are given in subsequent memos to schools and colleges. In this study we investigated the extent to which these activities actually occurred in the schools we visited.

1.2.3 External Supervision

TDU (1996) stipulated that college tutors should follow and co-ordinate the progress of their students in schools. This task includes supervising and assessing school-based student teaching practice. According to TDU college tutors are expected to visit students under their care for at least five times during the 20 months of school-based teaching practice. To record those activities TDU provided two forms for the tutors.

The first form is called Form D: Assessment of Teaching Practice Through Lecturers. Tutors document the names, particulars of students, the date of assessment, the subjects which they assessed and the grades awarded. The second form for tutors is called Form B: Student's Progress Sheet. These forms are kept for each student by tutors in charge. They are a record of end of residential phase exams results, assignment marks, project marks, assessment of teaching practice by school heads, PEA and college tutor.

PEAs are also expected to supervise and assess teaching practice during the 20 months of school-based training. According to TDU PEAs are expected to supervise each student at least twice a month. They use the same supervision forms as head teachers to record progress and grades awarded to the students. We also explored whether these supervisory visits actually took place and how effective they were.

1.2.4 Zonal Meetings

PEAs in each zone are required to conduct 3 zonal workshops per term. At the end of 20 months of school-based training each zone is required to have had 12 such workshops. A record of the workshops is to be documented on Form C: Zonal Workshops, Orientation of School Heads. This form is a record of the date, duration, venue, facilitators, number of students and remarks for each workshop conducted. We attended two of these meetings to verify the nature of activities which transpired.

1.2.5 Assignments and Projects

Students under MIITEP are required to write up 12 assignments and 4 projects while they are undergoing school-based training. Qualified teachers, head teachers, PEAs and tutors are required to assist the students in the write-ups especially the projects. Students record these activities on Form A: Training Activities Supervised by PEA and Form B: Training Events Supervised by Head teacher or Deputy. In this study we examined the extent to which students are assisted in these tasks.

To stress the importance of the tasks set for all players TDU made the following appeal in a memo:-

To adjust its planning and to have a realistic feedback from the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and from the schools, sub zones and Districts the MIITEP would like to monitor the implementation of its training components. Everybody contributing to the MIITEP is requested to participate in this monitoring and keep records of his or her activities. MIITEP hopes that keeping of records will be of assistance to all of you to organise and keep track of your work.

Part of this study focused on how far these records were being kept and used. Table 2 gives a summary of the activities planned for MIITEP students during the five terms of school-based training.

Table 2: A Schedule Of Visits And Meetings By Different Trainers Per Student.

Period	TRAINERS			
	Head teacher	PEAs	Tutors	Zonal meetings
Per week	4		-	-
Per month	16	2	-	1
Per term	48	6	1	3
5 terms	240	30	5	12

An analysis of the feasibility of these targets and how far the trainers managed them is given in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

2.1 Sampling

This chapter outlines the procedure followed in collecting and analysing data and firstly notes how the sample was selected. In order to find out how school-based training was being conducted we selected two teacher training colleges, college tutors, PEAs, head teachers and students in schools to act as our samples and participants.

2.1.1 Teacher Training Colleges

We selected St Joseph's Teachers College in Dedza District in the Central Region and Blantyre Teacher's College in Blantyre District in the Southern Region. The reason for selecting these colleges was to use one Grant Aided College and one Government College. However due to unforeseen circumstances Blantyre College was closed and some of the students were reallocated to Montfort College in Chiradzulu District when the research activities were already underway. This being the case Montfort College was also included in the study at that stage. Montfort College is an all-male college run by the church that runs St. Joseph's College. It is a grant aided college just like St. Joseph's. However the problems at BTC compelled TDU to ask Montfort College to accept female students as well from BTC to attend the revision and final examination session. Some tutors from BTC were also sent to Montfort- to help ease the pressure on the latter's tutors.

2.1.2 College Tutors

We selected two tutors from St Joseph's Teachers College and two from Montfort Teacher's College. These were selected because they were College Teaching Practice Co-ordinators and sat on the College Assessment Committees. It was hoped therefore that they would provide an in-depth view of what sort of supervision and assessment was carried out by the colleges.

2.1.3 Primary Education Advisors

We decided to use Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) from Dedza, Blantyre Rural, Blantyre Urban and Chiradzulu Districts. We selected these PEAs because our sampled schools are in these Districts. The PEAs were responsible for conducting zonal workshops and for supervising and assessing students in schools in their zones. The research team wanted to find out about these zonal meetings and the school-based supervision which they conducted.

2.1.4 Primary Schools

The study used 11 schools which were in the previous sub-studies but this time we included two more schools because they had groups of students we were looking for. The schools are:-

Dedza LEA (new), Kapalamula 1 (new), Kapalamula 2, Linthipe and Kakolo in Dedza District; Thanganyika, and Pamdule in Ntcheu District; Malimba in Chiradzulu District and Ntenjera, Chiraweni, Mbayani and Naotcha in Blantyre District. Here the research team wanted to contact the head teachers of the schools and hold focus group discussions with the student-teachers in cohorts 3,4 and 5. The heads of schools were selected because of their expected role in the training of teachers under MIITEP.

2.1.5 Students

As for the focus group discussions, students in MIITEP cohorts 3,4 and 5 were used because these were the cohorts which had gone through most of the MIITEP course and had almost finished. For cohort 3 what was remaining was just to sit for the final examinations in college. This being the case it was hoped that they would be in a position to express their expectations, experiences and views about MIITEP especially school-based training. In all there were nine focus group discussions each comprising 2 to 5 student-teachers. Both male and female student-teachers participated. In all there were 22 female participants and 6 male participants. However such a planned discussion did not take place at Chiraweni primary school because all cohort 3, 4 and 5 student-teachers were absent for various reasons. At Kakolo and Linthipe primary schools there were no cohort 3,4 and 5 student-teachers and we did not hold any focus group discussion. Table 3 below summarises the sample of schools and students who participated in focus group discussions.

Table 3: Number of Students Used in Focus Group Discussions per School

District	Zone	School	No. of male students	No. of female students	Cohorts
Blantyre Urban	Ndirande	Mbayani	0	3	3 and 4
Blantyre Rural	Lunzu	Ntenjera	1	2	3 and 4
		Naotcha	2	3	3 and 4
		Chiraweni*			
Chiradzulu	Njuli	Malimba	1	1	3 and 4
Ntcheu	Lizulu	Thanganyika	1	1	3 and 4
	Kapalamula	Pamdule	1	2	3 and 4
Dedza	Boma	Deza L.E.A.	0	4	3 and 4
		Kapalamula 1	0	2	4 and 5
		Kapalamula 2	0	4	3 and 4
	Linthipe	Kakolo*			
	Linthipe	Linthipe*			

* No Focus Group Discussion

In our sample there is a preponderance of women because the schools are in fairly accessible areas where women are usually posted following spouses at their places of work.

2.2 Instruments

The instruments which we used to collect the data were structured / guided interviews. For the tutors the interviews focussed mainly on preparations before going out for supervision and assessment, the actual supervision exercise, the cost and funding for the supervision/assessment exercise and their expectations, experiences and views about school- based training and MIITEP as a whole.

The interviews for the Heads of schools focused on supervision, school support for the student-teachers and their expectations, experiences and views about MIITEP.

For the Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) the interviews focused on preparations for the zonal workshops, activities at the zonal meetings, funding and their expectations, experiences and views about these zonal workshops. The focus was also on their student supervision activities.

Finally the Student Focus Group Discussions focussed on supervision by tutors, heads of schools and PEAs; projects and assignments, zonal meetings/workshops, school support and their views about MIITEP and their perceptions about the effectiveness of these activities.

2.3 Procedure

Two researchers, Demis and Shadreck were involved in the selection of the samples and participants and the subsequent visits to TTCs, schools and District Education Offices.

At each location we interviewed the selected participants with Demis taking notes and Shadreck manning tape records. Our impressions and observations were recorded in form of field notes.

Our major problems in conducting this field study were to synchronise the activities of colleges, PEAs and schools with our work schedules. Inadequate and irregular funding of the different MIITEP activities made it very difficult for us to decide when to visit a location. It transpired that colleges' opening dates were postponed several times forcing us to make false starts and be hesitant in drawing up a fixed plan. The closure of BTC disturbed our overall design of the study. We now had to incorporate Montfort College. Funding of zonal meetings were announced so suddenly that we were able to visit only two workshops in Blantyre.

When we visited our 11 longitudinal study schools used in previous MUSTER sub-studies we were confronted with two problems. First some of our selected participants

were not available because they were either absent or had moved elsewhere. Second in four of our selected schools we could not find students of our target cohorts and therefore did not conduct focus group discussions. In one District we selected an alternative school to provide us with the required sample of students.

We were unable to follow PEAs and tutors in their supervisory visits because they have no programmes or at times did not follow their plans. For example it was not possible to follow tutors on a visit to schools because they had to seek out the students by trial and error as there were no records indicating where the students were teaching. As an alternative we therefore decided to ask head teachers and PEAs to accompany us to the classrooms so we could let them observe and assess students teaching and at the same time interview them informally.

Another complication was that during a single visit we were attempting to collect data for other sub-studies as well. This made our work rather time consuming and sometimes we had to postpone gathering of particular data to subsequent visits.

2.4 Analysis of Data

Tape recorded interviews were transcribed and the emerging themes were juxtaposed with our observations and field notes.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings of our study on the activities of MIITEP during school-based training. The focus was on the support the schools rendered to the students to enable them to acquire teaching skills and at the same time prepare for their final examinations. Specifically the chapter reports on the school enabling conditions, supervision carried out by head teachers, PEAs and college tutors, zonal meetings and the distance education mode. The aggregated experiences by students, head teachers, PEAs and tutors in their various tasks are then considered to give an indication of how school-based training has impinged upon students' learning.

3.2 School Support

The Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education programme (MIITEP) assumes that the school will provide enough support to enable the student teacher to acquire the practical knowledge and skills needed to become an effective teacher. Student teachers spend 20 of the 24 months of training in the school. They are expected to fulfil a number of activities as part of training. This includes teaching, writing projects and assignments and attending zonal workshops. At the same time the school with the head teacher as co-ordinator is expected to provide a conducive environment for training. The school is supposed to provide teaching and learning materials such as chalkboards, teacher guides and others so that the students can have experience of using them and learning how to make the most out of the available materials. Qualified teachers at the school are the most vital training resource at the school and therefore are expected to take a major role in the training processes. According to TDU (1996)

... Experienced teachers are expected to assist the students in their day to day work whenever possible. Some experienced teachers may be assigned by the head to supervise the teaching of some MIITEP students in the school.

The head teacher is supposed to initiate workshops where all matters concerning the problems of the students would be discussed for the benefit of the students.

In order for the school to offer any kind of support to students the head teacher and the qualified teachers needed to appreciate how crucial their roles were in the programme. Several workshops and seminars had been organised at the outset of the programme to sensitise the head and their deputies to the philosophy underlying school-based support to students. When we visited the schools it was clear that head teachers had not been convinced of the worth of their input in the programme. It

seemed the idea of initiating any plausible and effective student support systems at the school was never deeply entrenched in their minds. Some seemed to have given up when they considered the tasks as set against the meagre resources and other inhibiting factors in the schools. To them the school was not well prepared to handle training on a large and prolonged scale as dictated by MIITEP as one head teacher summarised,

I don't think we support them adequately. There are no materials, no proper classrooms. Assistance needs time, materials and proper rooms and besides there are too many of them. We have no guidance from books. But when we go to MSSP we come back with something and we gather the students together to ask them to improve.

Sometimes the students' attitudes have tended to discourage school management from taking the training seriously and one lady head teacher complained that the students

...are lazy and not serious .. they are always outside of classrooms chatting. They absent themselves without the knowledge of the office and without proper reasons.

Similarly a supportive head teacher lamented

...Students are provided with some teaching materials especially in the infant section. Now we have left-over paper from the voting exercise which we are using as chart paper. School-based training is working. I visit them regularly. But academically we can't do much. I tell them to read a variety of books but they don't read even the Student Teacher Handbooks. Maths and science subjects are giving them problems and English for most of these temporary teachers.

It then seems that even when the school may be willing to assist in the programme there still exist some major setbacks that can not be surmounted without the support of the students themselves and the organisers of the course. The following paragraphs outline the support systems which we investigated and report the activities which were tried and to what extent these impacted on students' learning in schools.

3.2.1 Teaching and Learning Materials

Firstly, the schools lacked adequate teaching and learning materials to support a student. For example basic materials like teachers' guides, chart paper, pens and even student handbooks have been mentioned as lacking in most schools in the sample. Instead the students needed to learn how to scrounge whatever materials were required. This set them asking around and trying hard to acquire teaching materials from unexpected quarters. When they couldn't they went ahead and taught without the necessary teaching and learning aids. On a positive note it can be said that the dire conditions in the schools compelled them to learn to be resourceful. In Blantyre students from one school went to the Schools Supplies Unit to get material they

needed in their schools but were turned away because firstly the Unit deals with only the District Education Office and not individuals and secondly because the Unit did not have what the students were requesting. They now needed to use the environment as the source of materials. Colleagues and friends were consulted on how to deal with particular situations arising from lack of or inadequate materials.

This indeed provided a rich environment for the students to learn the realities of the school situation. But it cannot be said the school was prepared to assist students. Only if the school could be a provider rather than a recipient of support from students could it be said the school acted as a training centre. In almost all schools students complained they did not have Teachers Guides for Stds. 4 to 8 in various subjects. Subsequent efforts to get these materials proved futile and therefore students merely plodded along in the dark acquiring bad practice in the process. We found one student who had not written lesson-plans for the entire term claiming he had no paper and reference books to use. Clearly this was an extreme case of dereliction of duty on the pretext of lack of materials because other teachers at the school were teaching under the similar conditions. What can be said here is that to a certain extent the schools in dire straits slowed down rather than facilitated learning. The same student had the audacity to go in class to teach perimeter without any teaching aid, not even a ruler for measuring distances. The PEA we were working with threatened to punish this student if no change was going to be reported within the week. Here the head teacher felt powerless to confront the student when he could not offer the necessary support. When a programme wishes to train as many teachers as possible in the shortest time possible then the time factor becomes paramount and needs to be used prudently.

The failure of head teachers to do anything about the problem of lack of teaching materials in the schools is one of the elements which frustrated and undermined their authority and commitment to support training at the school level. Therefore head teachers needed to be seen to be doing something about teaching and learning materials but this was beyond their capacity. The result was that heads were non-committal, not having any power to effect or mobilise remedial measures. So in terms of teaching and learning materials the schools were not able to provide much assistance to the students and in the process some students learnt to be resourceful.

In contrast to the first student we were impressed by the resourcefulness of a female teacher at the same school. She was introducing the topic "volume" in mathematics and she brought a number of tins and plastic bottles of different capacities to show the children how volume of differently-shaped materials can be estimated. It was difficult to imagine how this topic could have been introduced without any teaching aids. Therefore for some students the dire situation provided impetus to being resourceful but for others it provided a nightmare. It is important to note that there are certain basic materials which are needed such as text books and teachers' guides which a teacher cannot do without and the schools should provide them. At the same time there are other teaching aids which can be improvised and this was what the students needed to try out.

Much as the schools are not able to provide the basic resources for classroom practice, students may also be encouraged to appreciate the virtue of being resourceful. Visiting

other more resourced schools is also one way of alleviating this problem. What was apparent was that students could improvise certain teaching and learning aids but it may be difficult to improvise basic materials such as teaching guides, student handbooks, text books, syllabuses etc. Therefore basic materials should be made available to students when they arrive at a school. It is hoped that the Teacher Development Centres will act as resource centres for such materials.

3.2.2 Class Partners

Staffing conditions at the schools was also one of the factors determining how much the schools could organise support from qualified teachers. As shown in Table 4 in six out of the thirteen cases the untrained teachers outnumbered the qualified teachers. The conditions at the schools were such that different forms of support from the qualified teachers could easily be mobilised. However this was eclipsed by the inability of the head teachers to fathom how the situation could be manipulated to mobilise the support. In all but one school teachers were paired to work together. However the pairing was organised to reduce the load of all the teachers so that instead of teaching 45 periods per week they had half or less load depending on the number of teachers per class. It was not meant as a training strategy to benefit the students. The partner was not obliged to stay on in the classroom as the student was teaching and vice versa. That is why most students were paired at random either with qualified teachers or fellow students.

However, there were still some benefits from doing only half a load. Firstly, the students would be given time to concentrate on other MIITEP activities such as reading, and writing assignments and projects. Secondly, they were given time to reflect on the day's work and they would have more time for planning next day's work. Thirdly, taking into account the resource constraint the students would have enough time to scrounge for the teaching/learning aids which they needed. Teaching half load also gave the students the opportunity to mark pupils' work with more concentration taking into account the large numbers of pupils involved. Finally, the students would be able to observe their partners teach thereby gain some practical skills in for example class management.

The disturbing thing was that even when they were paired there was little effort to organise learning opportunities like classroom observation and clinical supervision between the partners. Only in one school students indicated they had made arrangements with qualified teachers to conduct training activities such as classroom observation followed by discussions. In other schools the students said they observe qualified teachers secretly or informally without arranging with the qualified teachers and therefore there were no organised discussions or dialogue to help the student. At times students would ask for guidance from the qualified teachers or partners and they usually got assistance but there are still schools where qualified teachers and student relationship is poor mainly because of negative attitudes towards untrained teachers in the system. In such cases the students are shy to ask for or seek assistance. At one school the students reported they don't even try to approach qualified teachers on any issue pertaining to teaching or training and they are referred to in derogatory terms.

When asked if it was possible for the students to observe qualified teachers and discuss the lessons one student put it succinctly and said

I don't think it can happen. Maybe if we could sit down and pray

showing what a deep rift there was between the two camps. At another school the problem was with the head himself. These words coming from students paint a sad situation:

..... This school put students together. We asked the head to pair us with qualified teachers but he said no! He always shouted at us.

Under such conditions the students were learning under duress and could get support only if they made an effort to get attention. In fact this issue was presented and discussed at one of the zonal meetings in Blantyre showing how inhibiting poor relations at a school can be. So while pairing reduces the load of a student in some cases little else is done to derive maximum benefit for students. Here the training missed the opportunity to employ the notion of mentoring to the maximum. Even when students are paired together there is no one to guide them as to how they can benefit from this arrangement.

Table 4 below depicts the number of qualified teachers and unqualified teachers in the sample schools and their pupil enrolments.

Table 4: Numbers of Qualified Teachers (QT), Unqualified Teachers (UT) (%) and Pupils Per School.

School	QT	UT (as % of QT+UT)	No. of Pupils	Cohort 1	Cohorts 3&4	Cohort 6
1 Mbayani	74	39 (34%)	7000	2	>3	0
2 Naotcha	25	48* (66%)	3500	3	5	1
3 Thanga	6	16* (73%)	1326	0	2	3
4 Ntenjera	16	21* (57%)	1305	3	3	1
5 Kapalamula 1	10	12* (55%)	1200	0	2	3
6 Dedza	28	11 (28%)	1038	1	4	0
7 Malimba	12	10 (45%)	957	0	2	3
8 Chiraweni	5	10* (67%)	945	3	5	2
9 Pamdule	6	6 (50%)	929	0	3	2
10 Mtonya	8	7 (47%)	604	0	5	2
11 Kakolo	2	3* (60%)	572	0	2	1
12 Kapalamula 2	7	7 (50%)	451	2	4	1
13 Linthipe	3	1 (25%)	246	0	0	1

- *Schools where UTs outnumber QTs
- Note that some UTs have not yet been enrolled in MIITEP and that now cohort 1 is considered as trained.
- Brackets show % of total teachers

One advantage accruing from pairing teachers in a class is that the students are able to choose which subjects they want to teach first so that after gaining confidence they can switch to the remaining subjects. So students were teaching 4 to 5 subjects out of

a possible 9. This arrangement allows a student to learn how to teach in phases drawing from the experiences of other teachers albeit unwittingly. However schools where pairing was not possible because of low staffing levels students had to teach full loads.

Therefore different students were experiencing different classroom conditions but not much had been organised to maximise their learning. An opportunity to use other teachers to observe students or students to observe the other teachers and discuss classroom issues was provided but little was done to achieve this. It appears students, qualified teachers and head teachers were not sufficiently knowledgeable on how best the existing classroom setting could be utilised to benefit the student. Most of all if both students and qualified teachers recognise each others' roles and positions at the school then perhaps some form of mutual understanding can be reached to develop a trainer-student relationship. There is the possibility of class partners arranging their own programme of support without waiting for the head to institute a school wide approach. However it is incumbent upon the head teacher to encourage such practice as a matter of policy.

3.2.3 Class Allocation

Class allocation was another way of facilitating the training of students at the school level. TDU had recommended that students should be given the junior section and not the infant and senior sections. The idea was to let students handle classes where class management and content would not be too cumbersome for them. After learning the basics of teaching then they would be allowed to try the infants where special methods are employed and the senior section where pupils are more alert thus requiring expert handling of both content and class management. However staffing conditions did not permit head teachers to confine students to Std 3 – 5. Instead head teachers claimed they allocate students as well as qualified teachers to classes according to competence of the teachers, interest and other prevailing conditions. As a result there were cases of students teaching in the senior section because they were perceived as competent, others were in the infant section, given as a favour so they could knock off early and the majority were in Std 3 – 5 as TDU suggested. Some students did not like the classes they were given because there had been no prior consultation. Some schools allocated students to different standards at a time so they could gain more experience in handling different classes while others let students stay on in one class for the entire training period. In general students allocated to Stds 4 and below complained they would not experience teaching in the English language because all subjects at this level are taught in vernacular. Teaching English as a subject at the infant level is a nightmare. The complaint is that the new methods of teaching English which are advocated – the communicative methods- assume that the children have some working knowledge of the language and yet this is not the case in Malawi. This, compounded by a poor background in spoken English on the part of the student results in low quality teaching and learning in the lower classes.

It would appear then that class allocation to students was given thought by head teachers mostly because TDU had alluded to this but consideration of other factors prevented them from acting according to the suggestion. In situations where students

greatly outnumbered qualified teachers it was not possible to concentrate all students in the junior section only. The head teachers then tended to have the final say as to who was to be allocated to particular classes without consultation with the students.

3.2.4 School-Based Workshops

It was also noted that only two schools in the sample had conducted any workshops geared at helping students during the term. In the other cases the head teachers said they had done something like this in the past but not in the present school session. Head teachers claimed there is too much work and too many students; they preferred to talk to individuals informally, focusing on the problems of the individuals. Organising activities for students seemed to constitute extra work as long as these required the head teachers' physical presence. Table 5 gives a summary of some student support activities in the sample schools.

Table 5: Mode of Support

School	Utt-utt Pairs	Qt-utt Pairing	Random pairing	No Pairing	Class allocation agreed	Work-Shops
1Ntenjera			✓			
2Chiraweni			✓			
3Mbayani			✓		✓	✓
4Naotcha		✓				
5Malimba			✓			
6Pamdule		✓			✓	✓
7Thanga			✓			
8Kap 1			✓			
9Kap 2			✓			
10Dedza	✓		✓			
11Linthipe		✓				
12Kakolo				✓	✓	
13Mtonya			✓			

In sum Table 5 shows that only in one school was there no pairing of teachers mainly because the school was a junior school where staffing could only allow one teacher per class. In the other schools staffing levels were such that teachers could be paired in a number of classes. The pairing was done at random in almost all the schools without regard to whether one was an untrained teacher or the other was a trained teacher. This shows that head teachers had little thought about the pairs working as teams in quest of professional growth. Head teachers seemed to dictate where a teacher is going to teach rather than discuss this with the teachers and those who did discuss seemed to be those who were also able to organise workshops for the students. It appears therefore that head teachers who were prepared to assist did so in a number of ways and those who were not only offered token support.

3.2.5 School Management

One area where the schools did better in training students was in management issues. In all the schools students were given responsibilities in the various school committees. Some headed and others belonged to committees such as examination

committees, discipline committees, sports committees, beautification and labour committees and even school development committees. In these groups students were able to learn the realities of running a school from different aspects. At one of the schools a student was acting as an advisor to the head teacher. Firstly the student was quite articulate in the English language and in his presentations. Secondly the student had stayed at the school for six years teaching in a senior class. Thirdly the head teacher was new at the school and therefore needed old hands to help her get a feel of the scope of the school culture. The head had, for example, asked the student to design and display all the information posters in the head teacher's office and he was consulted on student teacher issues. In some schools students were asked to conduct assemblies for the whole school. This involvement gave students first-hand experience on how to go about the day-to-day management of schools. In this regard, school-based training was seen to make a positive contribution to the overall preparation of the teacher under MIITEP. However it should be borne in mind that this support was not offered as a deliberate training strategy but rather as a way of easing pressure on all the teachers by distributing duties evenly.

Related to this was community involvement. There are examples of students who have been accepted in the local communities and given various responsibilities. Some students worked as Church Choir Masters, Church Elders, Sports Coaches for community sports teams and in other capacities. Such kinds of experience provided a basis for learning how to establish relations between schools and the communities.

Full treatment of the actual teaching itself is given in another report but for purposes of this document we checked the students' records to give us an indication of what they were doing. We found that the students had files and note-books in which they were keeping track of what they were doing in their teaching. Most students had timetables which indicated the class and the subjects they were teaching. We also had occasion to inspect their schemes of work and lesson plans. The students had been instructed in college to write schemes of work for all the subjects even when they would be teaching only a few of them. We found that almost all students had done this and the head teachers had endorsed the work. In the case of lesson plans all teachers are required to submit their plans to the head or deputy every morning before they start teaching. This was also being followed by the students although they complained it was hard work especially for those teaching all the subjects.

In addition the students kept progress records and attendance registers in various formats. Students said they had been taught a number of formats for presenting these records and it was up to individuals to use whichever format they preferred. They also had seating plans for their classrooms but some said they did not adhere to them because their classes were conducted outdoors where it was difficult to stick to one seating plan. Colleges also required the students to keep daily diaries where they could record interesting events during their training. This is one area where we found students not managing well. The diaries were scanty and long periods elapsed without entries.

In sum the students were kept busy teaching and attending to school matters. There was not much time to work on college work at the school. Very few were treated as

students or seen to require the schools' attention to improve their teaching. Apart from the supervision by the head and others students plodded along on their own in the classroom.

In general student support at the school level was less prominent in big schools and where students out-numbered qualified teachers. In small schools it was possible for heads to focus on particular individuals because in turn these individuals would be used in various capacities for the benefit of the school. In big schools management issues are overwhelming and MIITEP issues seemed another burden. The head teacher at one of the big schools did not even know some of the students in the school. Under whatever conditions the schools operated the whole support system set up at a school depended on the conviction and commitment of the head teacher. Any school-based programme that does not involve the support of the head teacher as demonstrated in the case of MIITEP is bound to encounter implementation problems.

For example two head teachers in the sample we used clearly did not believe in MIITEP and thought that they (head teachers) had been given a raw deal for not being paid for taking part in the students' training activities. As a result they did their work merely as a fulfilment of the requirements of MIITEP, mostly delegating the tasks to other teachers. Except at one school where the head teacher performed all MIITEP tasks alone, all heads delegated to or enlisted the help of senior qualified teachers in the MIITEP activities. In one case the head teacher was disappointed by the behaviour and attitude of some students and therefore went about providing support grudgingly. At another school the head teacher portrayed a picture of following what had been asked of them and showing that they wanted to help out mainly because the school was close to the DEO's office. At yet another school where there were no classrooms the head teacher complained that the curriculum was new to the qualified teachers and that there were too many students but there was little or no materials to enable the school to support the students adequately. At one school the head was new and was awed at the prospect of supervising students without having had training in the exercise. A feeling of inadequacy was apparent, blaming lack of activity on, for example, the unavailability of supervision forms. However there were two enthusiastic head teachers who took the idea on board and went about supervising the students with the help of their deputies and qualified teachers. These heads also assigned the qualified teachers to help the students in writing lesson plans and preparing teaching/learning aids.

Underlying all this is the need to enlist the support of head teachers in a task that largely depends on them for its success. The major concern is the repertoire of ideas that can be brought into play in such an arena as a typical school in Malawi. Heads needed to have a wider perspective of school-based training apart from mere classroom supervision. One head whose school has one temporary classroom said

...In class allocation we only consider those about to go to college to finish and give them std 3 which has a temporary classroom so that they can use nature tables, charts etc for assessment. We have never considered subject allocation and never considered their teaching load because they are many of us and they teach few subjects anyway.

This showed that there wasn't much else the head could do to help.

It also reveals that MIITEP needs to assess the nature of the schools where school-based training could be carried out effectively. Clearly some schools are not in a position to provide any meaningful support for classroom practice to MIITEP students. Both human and physical resources should first be identified before sending a student to learn how to teach because teaching involves many other complex tasks apart from standing in front of a class maintaining order. In some schools it was apparent that the senior management did not take on board the idea of training teachers enthusiastically.

3.3 Supervision By Head Teachers

Head teachers are the best-placed individuals to organise and facilitate school-based training. Under MIITEP head teachers are expected to organise enabling conditions for student teachers, and supervise each student four times a week with the help of qualified teachers. Our visit to the schools showed that the head teachers are aware that they needed to help untrained teachers but due to several reasons they seem not to satisfy the needs of the students. All except one had been oriented into the requirements of MIITEP by both TDU and PEAs. It is interesting to learn how the head teachers went about facilitating school-based supervision.

Half of the head teachers set up a supervision timetable. Almost all also solicited the help of deputy heads and other senior teachers in the task. When we visited the schools in the middle of the term most heads had not yet started supervising the students as per the timetable. They claimed they had supervised cohort 1 and 2 in the previous term but had not yet done so for the other cohorts. One head teacher said

We have not supervised any cohort this term but now that cohort 3 is going for revision and final examinations we will get to them.

This is an indication that this task is seen as a fulfilment of a requirement without regard to what supervision is supposed to achieve. The head teachers supervise mechanically at the end of the school-based period meaning that the student is not given time to use what the head teachers have discussed or pointed out. Supervision timetables are not adhered to because head teachers claim there is lack of time. They claim the task is time-consuming because there are too many students to supervise and that there are other tasks which also demand their attention. This is put very well by one head teacher who said

... We were advised to visit them according to a given number of times but could not manage. There is too much work. I teach, I am head and there are many of them..... We are doing a good job but this job is for tutors and PEAs. We were told they would give us some incentives but we get nothing in return. Tutors stay in college doing nothing while we are working with their students.

It was apparent that supervising each student four times a week in schools where students outnumber qualified teachers is perhaps unrealistic. No one school, even with a more or less balanced proportion of qualified teachers to student teachers, managed to approach achieving this target. Some head teachers employ other qualified teachers, others tackle the problem alone but the overall outcome is that the heads seem to realise the impossibility of fulfilling the task and so become indifferent to the training. They point out they do not have forms to use in the supervision, and other qualified teachers recoil at the idea of supervising someone in a new curriculum in which they were not oriented and with which they are not themselves familiar. Most of all, head teachers seem to believe that training of students is the business of college tutors and since they do not get extra pay for this they feel they are being overworked and exploited. The success of this training programme hinges upon how much the head teacher supports it and therefore a different approach to the definition of roles needs to be explored to enlist their co-operation. Lack of any incentives for head teachers in this programme seems to be the overarching factor that is inhibiting professionalism and creativity at the school level. The Malawi Schools Support Systems Project (MSSSP) is currently training head teachers to appreciate the importance of their roles and there is hope that some of the hard feelings may be thawing.

Although the supervision by head teachers is not as often as was designed, students find them very helpful. Students indicate that the advice given is pertinent and appropriate and even though they are not always happy with the grades awarded they find the experience very rewarding. Students do not seem to have any preference for supervisors. One student remarked that

...The head teacher, the PEA and the tutors all give good advice.

They feel qualified teachers, head teachers, PEAs and tutors all do point out something which they see as contributing to their progress. Any supervision visit is cherished and so the students lament the lack of such activities especially the head teacher who is always with them. Another student commented that

...They (supervisors) have come very few times and lack of such visits is lagging the course behind. We actually complained to the PEA about the lack of supervision by the head teacher.

The number of times head teachers had visited cohort 3 and 4 students during the term are shown in Table 8. As can be seen from the table most heads only managed to visit each student once or twice in the term yet according to TDU head teachers, deputy head teachers and other teachers were expected to visit each student four periods a week. Clearly this was not happening according to plan. Perhaps the demand was some-how unrealistic. If we take the example of one of the schools with five qualified teachers and ten students it means that forty periods per week were to be devoted to supervising students and at the same time these teachers had other classes to attend to. This activity needed careful planning as well as commitment on the part of qualified teachers in order for it to work well. The head teachers therefore drew up some plans

but never fulfilled them for various reasons given earlier. In any case there wasn't any penalty for not doing MIITEP work properly!

3.4 External Supervision By PEAs

Apart from head teachers PEAs were the key players in student supervision who were in close proximity to schools. According to TDU (1996), PEAs among other things, are expected to orient and advise head teachers in the activities of MIITEP, supervise students in schools by identifying weaknesses and providing steps for remedy; assist students in preparing teaching/learning aids and keep track of students' progress. PEAs are expected to visit each student in his/her zone for at least twice a month. But this seems to be a daunting task for PEAs considering that they (PEAs) have other duties to perform besides MIITEP tasks such as supervising qualified teachers, inspecting schools, maintaining Teacher Resource Centres and organising in-service seminars for both head teachers and qualified teachers. Apart from these tasks PEAs are requested from time to time to attend workshops and seminars on crucial issues such as AIDS, MSSSP, gender, environmental issues etc which are not scheduled. So supervising each student twice a month seems difficult to achieve.

Table 6: Number of PEAs and Students in Study Zones.

District	Zone	No. of PEAs	No. of MIITEP Students	No. of Cohort 4 Students
Blantyre Rural	Lunzu	3	107	**
Blantyre Urban	Ndirande	3	86*	45
Dedza	Boma	1	76	9
Ntcheu	Kambironjo	1	27	3
Chiradzulu	Nyungwi	1	71	10

* excludes cohort 1 students

** figures not available at the time of visit

If we take the example of Boma Zone in Dedza District where three of our sample primary schools are located there are 76 MIITEP students all together under the care of one PEA as shown in Table 6 above. In the school time-table there are a maximum of 45 periods per week. Visiting each student twice a month is clearly not possible (let alone twice a week, as one TDU document suggested!). During our visit we conducted focus group discussions with students in cohorts 3, 4 and 5 and held interviews with 4 PEAs from four different zones. In addition we had data from the survey of cohort 2. The purpose of the FGD and interviews was to get a clear picture of the extent and effectiveness of the PEAs activities, and also to get their views as regards MIITEP vis-a-vis the roles expected of PEAs.

In all the schools we visited it was apparent that visits by PEAs were not as regular as expected. At the DEO, PEAs draw up plans for visiting student teachers as well as other tasks for a whole term. According to the plan in one zone for example, in the 13 weeks of the third term of the 1999 academic year only nine days were devoted to the supervision of MIITEP students. According to this plan each school was supposed to be visited only once a term for MIITEP business. The rest of the time was devoted to clinical and general supervision for whole schools which included students. This plan

clearly showed that the PEAs had seen the problem of supervising each student twice a month hence they decided to come up with their own rationalised plan.

As a result PEAs in the different zones developed their own logistics for supervision. For example in one zone there was only one PEA and he did not arrange visits specifically targeting MIITEP students. Instead he preferred joining a team of PEAs from the District to visit all schools for general and clinical supervision. So MIITEP students were supervised during such visits. This resulted in MIITEP students being supervised only once in a term. In another zone where there was also one PEA the approach was different. Here the PEA could organise visits specifically targeting MIITEP students and he preferred to work alone instead of in a team. This also resulted in MIITEP students being observed only once in a term. In two other zones there were 3 PEAs in each zone. Here the PEAs could arrange visits to supervise MIITEP students only and later go on general supervision of schools during which the MIITEP students were also supervised. This resulted in MIITEP students being observed twice a term. There was one peculiar case in one zone where MIITEP students had been supervised 5 times in the term. This was probably because the PEA was living close to the school. The number of visits made in each of the zones is depicted in Table 8.

Some PEAs gave advance warning to the students asking them to prepare particular lessons. Others demanded to see all the teaching and learning aids which the students had produced so far which is over and above the delivery of a particular lesson. PEAs would observe a student then discuss the shortcomings or weaknesses and merits of the lesson and then give an assessment grade. This was derived from the point scale on the MIITEP observation sheet. For the PEAs in three of the sample zones this was the modus operandi. In the subsequent visit the PEA would do the same things and give another grade at the end. One important point which was noted was that no reference was being made to previous visits and observations. In such cases progress was measured by an overall grade but without regard to the previous shortcomings. The trouble with an overall grade is that it does not tell which areas are improving or deteriorating.

Only in one school did we discern evidence of real supervision. There were three PEAs in this zone and they had visited the school three times. Each time they were drawing attention to specific areas and also making reference to previous discussions. In this particular case the PEAs never gave a grade but promised to come another time to assess. This is the only school where the PEAs had used the MIITEP Supervision Form at the time we visited. In our view we believe that other PEAs went about supervising and assessing at the same time in order to cover as many students as possible and avoid return visits.

Most students were awarded very high marks and only very few were awarded low grades. None of the students in our sample had been given a failing grade. This was also apparent when we worked together with the PEAs as we were trying to collect data on classroom performance for another sub study. This is borne out by the overall grades given in the end of-course examinations in teaching practice for cohort one

which also show that most students (>60%) got grade B which designates very good performance and only one person per college in the cohort was given a failing grade.

Lack of stationery seemed to have prevented the PEAs from completing some of the forms and even leaving students with written comments for future reference. There were so many forms to fill and some districts did not have most of them and therefore PEAs used what was available. If all forms were available, PEAs would have maintained some uniformity in their activities. This lack of stationery was also evident in the case of student files. PEAs, tutors and head teachers needed to sign in a student file every time they supervise. Most students did not have the forms and so PEAs did not sign.

PEAs themselves did not have records of what they had observed and what grades they had given because they had sent them to colleges through the MIITEP co-ordinator at the DEO. They did not have copies because of lack of stationery. This means that a student's progress could not be found at the DEO.

All students indicated they lacked teachers' guides and textbooks in certain subjects and they said that PEAs had promised to procure some but never came back. It was also indicated that PEAs did not bring any teaching and learning materials during such visits nor did they try to assist the students in improvising the materials. This was not in keeping with TDU's expectation which says:

...The main roles of PEAs will be to....assist students in liaison with head teachers and other teachers in preparing teaching and learning materials using local materials (TDU, 1996).

We also came across conflicting advice given by PEAs, tutors and heads. PEAs advised students to work together and help each other but the head teachers said each one should work alone especially on marking pupils' work. In college tutors told all students not to indicate the sums or problems in schemes of work while PEAs said they should even write down the examples. But at the school level students succumb to what the PEAs tell them. Such conflicts seem to emanate from what the Ministry asks the PEAs to do during workshops basing their advice on the practicality of the issue while tutors may not be looking for too much detail.

An important point to note is that students regard all supervision visits as important and beneficial. They stay for long periods without such visits and therefore welcome and cherish any supervision as long as they are guided and given a grade which ensures a contribution toward a final mark. A visit is also evidence that they are still remembered by MIITEP after college.

3.5 External Supervision By College Tutors

Under MIITEP tutors are expected to visit every student teacher for at least 5 times during the 5 terms of school-based training. During these visits they are supposed to supervise and then assess the student teachers' performance. This means that every tutor needs to visit each student once per term. If we take the case of St. Joseph for

example where there were 20 tutors and 300 students a tutor needs to set aside 15 days in the term to be able to visit all the students assigned to him or her. If the students are scattered in different schools as is the case then more days are likely to be needed.

According to TDU guidelines (1996), and the tutors' perspective, supervision, is taken to mean that tutors work with their student teachers. Among other things they are supposed to observe their students teachers teach, note strong and weak points in the lesson and then suggest ways as to how the student can improve on the weak areas. They are supposed to help the students in class management, organisational skills, preparation and use of teaching and learning materials, how to write schemes of work and lesson plans. These tutors are supposed to sit down with their students and discuss any problems which they (students) may be facing in the course of their training such as the lack of teachers' guides, paper etc. and they should endeavour to provide such materials to students. In other words the tutors are supposed to provide academic/professional, material and moral support to the students some of whom are located in very remote areas. In order to effectively carry out such demanding tasks it is recommended that tutors spend the whole day at a school. Therefore this entails a series of visits and contacts with the students for the whole period.

The tutors are also supposed to make thorough preparations prior to the visits. They are, among other things, supposed to hold in-house workshops in college on how to supervise and assess students in each subject. They also need to verify the allocation of students in schools in order to avoid situations whereby a student may not be actually at the school indicated on the list. Besides this, the tutors need to have steady and ready transport and financial support to be able to live away from their duty stations.

If tutors had only one cohort to visit at a time, and no other teaching duties, the numbers would be manageable. For example at St. Montfort there were 38 tutors who were assigned to supervise 284 cohort 2 students in 5 Districts which have nearly 600 schools. This means that each tutor has approximately 7 students to supervise who may be placed in any given school.

However, from the interviews with the tutors a number of issues came to light especially as regards the last supervision and assessment exercise (cohort 1 and 2). To begin with no serious preparations were made. It was a question of the College Teaching Practice Co-ordinator going to the District Education Offices to collect the lists of students and then allocating the supervisors in various districts in the college catchment area.

According to the logistics and financial support provided by TDU the tutors move in a team because there is a limited number of vehicles. At St. Montfort they were given 4 vehicles to cover the five districts. Some of the schools are inaccessible because of a bad road network system. Most are scattered over a very wide geographical area and are usually far apart. Further the students in the schools came from different colleges and the tutors did not have records of those coming from the other colleges. The information about student placement in school was not updated and it was difficult to

trace students from St. Montfort college let alone cohort 2 students. Table 7 below shows the number of schools per district where MIITEP students assigned to St. Montfort tutors are placed.

Table 7: Number of Schools with MIITEP Students For St. Montfort

District	No. of Schools
Machinga	204
Chiradzulu	70
Zomba	143
Mulanje/Phalombe	167
Total	584

It was also revealed that in 3 weeks with 4 vehicles they only managed to visit 128 cohort 1 and 2 students, out of some 550. During this period each student was visited once only and a grade was assigned. What made matters worse was that tutors could not observe the whole lesson. They could just observe for example the introduction of a lesson or the development or just the conclusion and give a grade based on such an observation. In all fairness such a grade could not be a true reflection of a student's ability because a single visit in itself was not enough. The tutors said this was so because they did not have adequate time and transport. They conceded that this whole exercise was not supervision at all but assessment which was not done fairly. To say the least students did not receive enough professional, material and moral support from their college tutors.

The other issue that came to light was that supervision by tutors is an expensive venture. Tutors and drivers used money for subsistence as they go out to the different districts to supervise the students and also require four-wheel drive vehicles which are expensive to acquire, run and maintain.

As MIITEP was implemented there was no time in between cohorts for the tutors to go and supervise students in schools. Every three months a cohort was expected in college for the residential training while at the same time some of their students were undergoing school-based training. This means that there were too many students for the tutor to take care of in a year and no time was allowed in the design of the programme for visiting students in schools. In summarising the effect of this situation one student complained:

...They never referred to our previous problems. So we do not know whether we have improved or not. Grades may go down because of this. They should come to supervise only.

In sum it can be seen that while it seems that the number of students and schools to be visited by a tutor is manageable in theory several factors militated against the implementation. Logistically it is not possible to carry out the tasks because of the placement of students and inadequate number of vehicles. If a tutor is assigned particular students in particular schools and location it would facilitate effective supervision. A space of time in between cohorts in college would offer an opportunity

to reach out to each cohort and result in meaningful supervision. This of course has cost implications on subsistence and transport which should be taken into account as the programme is being improved.

3.6 Zonal Workshops

Each cohort is expected to attend 12 zonal workshops and PEAs are charged with the task of organising them and also to act as facilitators. These workshops are meant to provide opportunities for students to continue studying the curriculum as documented in the student handbooks. There are specific topics which have been selected to be studied in the workshops. Further the workshops are also meant to provide opportunities for students and PEAs to look at issues of interest that are experienced during school-based training. TDU has provided a guide as to what topics each workshop should focus on. Each workshop was designed to last one day.

Each workshop is funded by TDU but the funds must be called from World Bank in Washington via Education Development and Management Unit (EDMU). These funds are to be used for transport and meal allowances for students. During our visit in September TDU had just received and released funds for the third and fourth zonal workshops for cohorts 3 and 4. This was rather disturbing because cohort 3 was due to go back to college for revision and final examinations. This means that there remained 8 workshops to be conducted within one month before going for revision and examinations and it was certain that these would not take place. In general we noted that for unknown reasons funding for zonal workshops was slow and irregular with students attending at most 5 workshops only during the entire 20 months of school-based training. This has greatly undermined the smooth running of MIITEP and complicated the delivery of other activities such as revision and examinations. Non-funding of most projects means that funds earmarked for the 12 workshops per cohort are never fully utilised. Clearly this leaves a negative impression on the ability of implementers to effectively run a program even when funds are available. It would appear that communication between TDU and EDMU was a major limiting factor. EDMU claimed sloppy accounting from PEAs in zones prevented it from calling for more funding from The World Bank in Washington with its stringent demands.

At the zonal level we found different approaches to dealing with the problem of funding. In Blantyre City statistics on the influx of students from other locations had not been submitted to TDU and the funds previously committed to one zonal meeting could not suffice. Therefore one zonal workshop consumed funds for two zonal workshops. As a result they had fewer workshops than others. In zones where schools were close to each other students were willing to attend workshops even without funding. Such zones registered more zonal workshops, some claiming they had conducted all the 12 workshops within the 20 months for cohort 1 and 2. However mounting workshops without funding was being questioned by students who suspected fraud somewhere. Students never believed the programme had no funds available. They always thought the system was out to cheat them somehow. One PEA confided that:

We make special arrangements when we have no funds. With cohort 1 and 2, I finished all the twelve seminars even without funds. But students think I have embezzled the funds. They demand the money...

meaning that students demand their travel and lunch money. Another PEA remarked that:

..Zonal meetings are breeding bad thinking when there is no funding. Students gang-up against us to demand their allowances thinking that perhaps we (PEAs) have not used the money meant for zonal meetings properly.

In zones where schools were far apart it was not possible to hold these zonal meetings if there were no funds because students needed to spend on travel which most were not prepared to do.

The conduct of the workshops also depended on the agreement of PEAs at the District level. In one district two zones conducted their workshops together resulting in several PEAs working as facilitators. At the same time such workshops had more than 30 students as participants. In two other districts PEAs decided to work alone with groups of 20 or less students. In one zone with three PEAs there was no need to team up with PEAs from other zones and so they conducted their meetings as a single zone. Therefore we had workshops conducted by lone PEAs with few students; those conducted by more than one PEAs with few students and those conducted by a team of PEAs from different zones with large groups of students.

After attending two such workshops at different locations we noted that these were similar to classroom settings with the lecture method, group work, student demonstration, discussion and practical work being the prominent means of interaction. Where there were two or more PEAs working we observed them teaching and the ensuing discussions were lively. Group work was the major strategy used during practical work. Each group was required to produce materials which would be carried back to respective schools. Students with specific skills and experiences were asked to demonstrate their skills to others and a spirit of cohesiveness and collegiality was in evidence. Students in one zone said that PEAs who worked alone at such meetings were overworked and the workshops lacked variety and suggested that several PEAs should work together to make the meetings more interactive. In two zones there were three PEAs at both zonal meetings. Three topics were covered, with all the PEAs participating in the proceedings, and this constituted team teaching. The main presenter was always referring to her two colleagues for comments and further clarification. In practical sessions all the three PEAs went around groups of students to assist. With such learning conditions the general consensus amongst students was that there was very little difference between PEAs and college tutors in their methods of teaching except that college tutors provided more details. On the whole zonal workshops provided impetus and encouragement to students to think about their training requirements. These were seen as times when students would make known their problems and hoped to get answers. Problems about the structure and activities of MIITEP were prominent but unfortunately PEAs were not always able to give

satisfactory answers mainly due to the unpredictable nature of the decisions made from TDU.

In our view the zonal meetings were more in keeping with the spirit of MIITEP where participatory methods were advocated. For example in the topic “How to prepare Science and Health Education Charts” the methodology followed was participatory, involving discussions, group work and presentations by groups. Students used improvised paper such as recycled paper and old calendars for chart paper. Tomato leaves were used to provide green colour and brick soil was used to provide red colour. Students took these materials back to their respective schools. All students interviewed indicated that these workshops were of great value and lamented that there were too few of them. There was also anxiety as to what would happen to the topics they had not covered bearing in mind that these would also be examinable in the final examinations.

Table 8: Number of visits by supervisors and number of zonal meetings for cohorts 3 and 4 per school

School	No. of supervisions by head	No. of supervisions by PEA	No. of supervisions by tutors	No. of zonal meetings
Kapa 1	1	1	1	4
Kapa 2	0	1	1	4
Mtonya*	-	-	-	-
Dedza LEA	2-3	1	1	4
Thanga	2-3	1	1	4
Pamdule	1-2	5	1	4
Ntenjera	1	2	1	4
Chiraweni*	-	-	-	-
Mbayani	1	1	1	3
Malimba	1	1	1	4
Naotcha	0	2	1	4

*no focus group discussion

Table 8 depicts the actual visits or meetings that happened during the term. These clearly do not tally with what TDU had expected as laid out in Table 2. At the end of each week the head teacher or his deputy is required to submit four reports or forms per student at the school. If there are ten students then the head needs to submit forty reports in the week. Projected to five terms this translates into massive amounts of reports and paper work. The situation in the schools is worsened by the unavailability of relevant forms to record the activities. PEAs also face similar problems. The frequency and massive numbers of forms to fill are compounded by limitation of travel due to insufficient fuel. In the case of tutors one visit per term in itself does not pose a problem but due to lack of time and the ineffective nature of the supervision this exercise proved to be an expensive charade. It therefore appears that more cost-effective strategies for school-based supervision need to be developed if the programme is to achieve its aims. More importantly the demands of TDU on head teachers, PEAs and tutors look unrealistic and need to be scaled down with appropriate strategies spelled out clearly.

3.7 Assignments And Projects

The distance mode of training consisted of assignments and project write-ups. For each of the 12 subjects there is one assignment. There is also one project write-up per subject in Music, Creative Arts, Religious Education and Physical Education. All the 16 tasks are undertaken during the 20 months while the students are also involved in teaching and reading in preparation for the end of course examinations. This activity is termed the distance education mode because the scripts are forwarded to colleges for marking and yet there is no other communication with the colleges to warrant the designation. During our visit to the schools we enquired about how far the assignments had been done and what assistance they had received from the school environment.

The first important finding was that students found the exercise a very academic undertaking. For example in science students had only to refer to their handbooks for answers. A typical assignment is as follows;

Refer to diagram

- (a) What is the meaning of the term classification of animals?
- (b) Classify the animals A to S into two major groups.
- (c) What characteristics did you use to come up with the two classes above?
- (d) Classify the animals A to S into groups.
- (e) Choose six of the groups of animals in (d) above and give one characteristic in each case which makes each group different from the other groups.

Such a question draws the student to the material presented in the text. Students indicated that the difficulty in answering such questions arose because it was difficult to comprehend the material without the help of tutors. On the other hand some project topics required students to read their handbooks and then substantiate their writing with real life examples to give them a flavour of research.

Students were prompted to source information, synthesise it and present it in a report form. They read different materials in addition to the handbooks. They discussed aspects of the projects with different resource persons at the school and outside the school environment. Priests, government officials, relatives and other persons were consulted. In many cases students worked together even travelling to other schools to meet with students of the same cohorts. However students in urban areas seemed to have had better access to information than those in rural areas. Students in isolated schools had problems getting assistance from outsiders because resource persons outside the school are rarely found in such areas. Students found the work rather difficult because of lack of information. Music presented the greatest challenge because not much had been covered in college due to lack of music tutors. Despite this most students thought they would get good grades in the assignments and projects.

Another important finding was that the school was not of great assistance to students in writing the assignments and projects. Apart from assistance given by some

qualified teachers in some schools, the schools themselves did not have much to offer. They have no libraries and the few books available were not relevant to the work on hand. Only teachers' guides were mentioned as very useful in some of the write-ups. Students complained of lack of even basic materials such as paper for writing the assignments. Head teachers and qualified teachers were sometimes mentioned as being of assistance. In most cases the qualified teachers were not ready, or willing to assist, saying they were not well-versed with the new teacher training programme and the exercises involved. While the school offered little support it was also apparent that preparation for these tasks at college was not adequate. Little guidance had been given on how to source information and how to present their findings. This caused a lot of anxiety amongst students and as a result students tended to copy each other's work. College tutors reported that most students lost marks because of plagiarism. In some cases the language was so good it was clear others had written the work for the students. One of the reasons for this was perhaps the low levels of articulation in the English language. It was noted that many students presented scanty material, lacking detail because of language problems. As a result most students failed to score the high marks they had expected.

Another aspect of the "home-based" education mode which featured prominently was that the home environment was not appropriate for conducting such an academic exercise. Household chores and family issues prevented students from concentrating on MIITEP work. In almost all areas working at night is not easy because of poor lighting facilities. This is more pronounced in rural areas where life is more taxing than in urban areas. Students had to travel long distances to collect information, thus requiring them to spend some money. Time to work on MIITEP tasks seems to have been a rare resource for most students. The only time they could do this work was during the holidays.

In general students accepted that this was part of their training and found the exercise rewarding despite the difficulties for it acted as a constant reminder that they were students. All students interviewed had almost finished writing and submitted all the 16 tasks. Others were withholding their work for fear that it would get lost and not get to tutors in good time. However school conditions and the home environment seem not to offer much in terms of academic, material and moral support. Lack of communication between the trainers in college and the students in school on these tasks is a major oversight in the design of the school-based training under MIITEP. This is also what makes the designation distance education a misnomer. Under the circumstances it would appear that such activities can best be supported at the college unless the school gives students time and support to manage their tasks. A student summed it all by saying:

The problem is there is no information. We need it from other people like church elders. Some refused because they wanted (demanded) money. We went to people like priests, fellow teachers both qualified and unqualified and relatives. We did not have enough time because of disturbances both at home and at school so we did this in the night.

We noted however that the nature of the assignments and projects was not investigative nor addressing the classroom/school experience of the students. Students were merely required to arrive at factual information by way of asking other people or reading extra materials apart from the student handbooks. Here MIITEP lost the opportunity to train students in research that would deepen their understanding of the theories and teaching methods being advocated in the course. There is a window of opportunity to regain real integration between theory and practice through the design of appropriate assignments and projects.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Conclusions

Several issues came out clearly from our findings regarding school-based training under MIITEP. The school itself and the trainers contributed to the outcome of the training process either because of their involvement or lack of it. These issues help to throw some light on the way teachers learn how to become teachers and the problems encountered during school-based training. According to Craig, Kraft and du Plessis (1997) it has been recognised that:

The organisational model of in-service programs which seems to be the most effective in improving instructional practices is *the school-based model*. The centralised institution, local teachers' centres and distance models are useful when carefully designed. However, successful professional learning is not found so much in the choice between different modes of provision, but in the ability of the provider to integrate the learned practical strategies with real needs in the classroom, and to provide an on going supportive learning environment.

This observation compels us to look critically at the school-based training which Malawi is trying out so that we can point out what factors seem to work for the students to learn how to teach. Our tentative conclusions are derived from the findings from the 13 schools using cohorts 3, 4, and 5. These are tentative because they are a reflection of what transpired before the programme was completed. These are still important because they provide us with ideas and problems about setting up a new teacher preparation system in a developing country like Malawi. In the main the effectiveness of school-based training under MIITEP depended heavily on the commitment of TDU in supporting the schools, and of key players in the training, as well as the commitment of both trainers and students in their respective roles. We therefore dwell on the extent to which TDU and the trainers fulfilled their roles as planned and the outcomes of their activities in relation to the training.

4.1.1 *The situation in the schools*

Students in schools were given a class to teach, some in the infant section, others in the junior section and very few in the senior section. In some schools the students were teaching a full load while in others they were teaching fewer subjects, depending on the staffing situation. In some schools some students were sharing classes with qualified teachers and in others they were sharing a class with fellow students. Head teachers checked their lesson plans every day and sometimes supervised them as a requirement from TDU. However heads lacked vision and insight into how to utilise and translate the existing school resources and activities into training /learning

experiences. Qualified teachers were seldom asked to act as facilitators in the training of the students. Activities like team teaching, clinical supervision, mentoring, classroom observation and discussion among the class partners featured very few times in our sample. These ideas did not seem to permeate the school system. Good opportunities to use qualified teachers or other unqualified teachers in creating a learning environment for the student were not utilised to the full. School timetables and resources were not extensively manipulated to give the student pedagogic and material support. Workshops earmarked for professional support for students were rare. The school ethos lacked the necessary elements for a training ground. In some schools a negative attitude toward untrained teachers militated against positive efforts to make school-based training a worthwhile option. The head teachers we interviewed were often ambivalent in the attitudes towards training, and most gave this little priority.

One may conclude, therefore, that a well-trained cadre of head teachers, supportive of training activities, is a necessary condition if training at the school level is to be sustained. The training should focus on how the various resources at the school can be used to form an acceptable environment for training.

While deliberate efforts to improve the training arena were wanting, the students did learn some skills as they were plodding along in their teaching. The process of teaching itself provided one of the most concrete means of acquiring teaching skills. College work, coupled with working at a school even without deliberate training, provided a good opportunity to learn skills such as school administration, classroom management, scheming, lesson planning, record keeping and community involvement. These are some of the aspects of teaching which can be best learned on-the-job. It should also be pointed out that the benefits accruing from pairing teachers were appreciated by students. Lower teaching loads and fewer subjects to teach at a time provided respite for the students to carry on with their college work and maybe reflect on their teaching.

4.1.2 Supervision by tutors

Under the prevailing conditions in the school much less supervision was carried out than was planned, with students imploring any one to come to their aid. Furthermore the nature of supervision by tutors left much to be desired. Two points stand out. Firstly, one visit cannot be said to constitute a supervision to affect progress. Several visits are required for one to supervise the change in behaviour which is sought. Therefore what the tutors did was merely an assessment activity. Secondly, the tutors spent very little time with the students because they were rushing to finish an allocated number of students in a short time. They did not have the opportunity to develop what the head teachers and PEAs had said, neither did they leave anything for the head teachers to work with. There was no collaboration between Tutor, PEA, and head teacher. As a result students derived minimal benefits from tutors. Students were not given time to absorb and apply the advice and therefore this was a futile exercise. Students cherished the visits merely because this showed they were still part of the programme and a grade was given at the end. Tutor supervision is expensive and should be justified by the nature of the professional and material support offered;

externally-based supervisors should not be used if local teachers are able to offer similar support and direction (see Kunje and Lewin,1999). Some students thought that tutors did not offer anything that the PEAs and the head teachers could not do. Other evidence suggests that some students had a much higher regard for the expertise of their tutors than for that of the PEAs and Heads; perhaps the latter need more training and experience before they acquire the same status as tutors in the eyes of the students.

4.1.3 Zonal workshops

Among all the activities organised zonal meetings were perceived to have the most dramatic impact on the behaviour of students. Students participated very enthusiastically and went back to their respective schools with new ideas which could be translated into practice. They made and constructed teaching and learning materials like the abacus, and charts which they took back to their schools. They practised and learned some cultural activities such as traditional dances which they were required to teach in schools. According to the PEAs and the students some schools now have needlework classes and most interestingly some male teachers are now handling needlework as a result of attending zonal meetings. Matters directly concerning student welfare, conditions of service and problems encountered as they teach were discussed in an open atmosphere. The zonal meetings also provided an opportunity for more theoretical work from the hand-book to be tried out in practice. This underscores the needs for students to work together and discuss matters directly affecting their teaching in an organised fashion. It is probable that if all the planned meetings had taken place they would have had a noticeable impact on student teaching during the 20 months of school-based training.

Finally students found assignments and projects write-ups very academically engaging. The write-ups helped students to appreciate the worth of wide reading and to see that information needs to be researched and presented in a particular form for others to consume. Apart from the teaching practice grade these assignments and project write-ups also provided tangible school-based activities which could contribute to their final grades. Students did not find the tasks insurmountable but rather time-consuming. The school and the home environment did not seem to offer much support and therefore the need to upgrade the resources at TDCs becomes a critical issue.

4.2 Some concluding comments

Looking back at the course we recognised several salient points about school-based training. Firstly, the students themselves should have the basic qualifications and background to appreciate the nature of the work in store for them at the school level. Secondly, comments like “students are lazy or absent themselves at the smallest pretext”-signal that there was some lack of conviction or commitment by students. This may be partly due to the unsupportive nature of the school organisation, but it could be argued that at this level of training students should demonstrate maturity and take initiative to improve their lot in a system which seems to be faltering. Thirdly, an important aspect to remember is that the behaviour of students during training may

also be moulded by the way they are assessed. If the nature of assessment does not emphasise overall performance on all aspects of school life such as cooperation, commitment, leadership, citizenship, providing positive learning situations, resourcefulness and scholarship the students tend to capitalise on the omissions and get away with excuses like – “we have no paper and notebooks to write lesson plans.” An assessment system that captured this behaviour would make students work diligently even in poorly resourced circumstances and despite their weak academic backgrounds.

It should be emphasised that levels of resourcing at a school seems to be critical for students. First and foremost is the need for basic resources like teachers' guides and writing implements. For MIITEP the presence of the student handbooks made life a lot easier for students. The handbooks served as a resource for all teachers and also served many purposes such as helping to interpret syllabuses and teachers guides. For many teachers at the school the new curriculum would have been difficult to teach without the handbooks. Therefore in poorly resourced schools where it is not easy to come by resource books it seems imperative that students be provided with survival resource material. This is where MIITEP should be applauded and emulated.

In addition to material resources for students, school-based training hinged on professional support offered. First there was an attempt to orient all head teachers on the modalities of supporting students more especially in supervision. This is important because guidance at the school level directs students from merely theoretical treatment of the classroom situation to actual blending of theory and practice. Trained or qualified instructors at the school were a necessary condition for real school-based training. In the absence of trained heads or teachers students were not very sure whether they were doing the right things or not. They lamented the lack of guidance even when they had the handbooks. Even more so the need to interact with instructors was prominent from which students would gain confidence, collegiality and camaraderie. Students would feel they belonged and were and acceptable as members of staff at schools. In the absence of this interaction students felt abandoned.

Although they received training as supervisors we note that heads did little to enrich the school-based training. Whether this was due to the shallowness of training or the inability of heads to translate school conditions into positive training opportunities is unclear. Further, heads or qualified teachers did not believe this was their job and felt that they were requested to do a lot more work than was reasonable, all of which watered down the efficacy of school-based training. This shows that training for headteachers or supervisors should also be coupled with recognition of the importance of the work being done to reinforce the commitment and conviction that their efforts are worthwhile. This attitude was missing in MIITEP, as could be seen from the way the supervisors approached this task perfunctorily and only towards the end of the course. As a consequence the guidance was hurried and sometimes contradictory.

One major culprit in the inadequate implementation of school-based training seemed to be untimely disbursement of funds earmarked for particular activities. The transport for PEAs which was promised was made available one year late and this fuelled disillusionment and helped to throw doubt on the future of the programme. Tutors

visited their students once in the 20 months and towards the end of the course, mainly because funds were not made available in good time. The tutors, PEAs and head teachers were asked to meet ambitious targets when resources were not properly identified and when schedules of events had not been properly embedded in the overall structure of the course. The Government and World Bank exacted stringent measures for disbursement of funds leaving TDU, DEOs and school management teams at a loss as to how to proceed in the training. At the end there are funding gaps which have surfaced and the course can only continue if new funds are identified. All this points to a situation where TDU conceived a training course whose resources were not disbursed regularly in an appropriate manner.

Even so, pockets of limited success were registered. Zonal meetings were possible in areas where the schools are not far apart. In such cases funding was not needed. Commitment and good will and perhaps a measure of professionalism triumphed. PEAs visited students who were in nearby schools more often than those in remote areas. Seeing how impractical it was to visit students as often as suggested by the TDU, some PEAs settled for their own programmes. The PEAs often adopted supervisory procedures depending on the nature of reporting forms available. This underlines the importance of external support if the actors at the school level are going to gain a sense of agency in the system at least in the initial phases of school-based training programmes.

4.2.1 Gender issues

It should also be pointed out that women students at the school level need special consideration given that they are expected to look after their families and at the same time attend to training tasks that require great personal effort in the absence of sustained school support. Culturally Malawian women take on the bulk of family and societal chores and this also applies to female students teachers. Therefore unsupportive school-based training places women in more difficult circumstances than their men folks. The homes and village life create difficult circumstances for students to engage maximally in home study. This also underscores the need to revitalise the distance-mode of training with frequent appropriate exchange of feedback to students.

Despite lack of adequate support, full involvement in teaching and school activities provided the most significant learning experience for students. How much they gained is subject to debate because of the uncoordinated nature of assessment. An overall pass rate of 81.18% in the final examinations and failure rates ranging from 0.8% to 3.7% per college in teaching practice for cohort 1 need further scrutiny to inform the debate.

4.3 Recommendations

1. We applaud TDU for trying to schedule the dates for zonal meetings although this was never followed. We however recommend that TDU should schedule all training activities on a comprehensive list of events. Dates, venues and

facilitators of important activities such orientation courses, zonal meetings, supervision by tutors, assessment by tutors, submission of assignments and projects, revision at college, final examinations and even dates for releasing examination results should be drawn up well in advance, as well as schedule for releasing funds. This will enable resources to be identified well in advance and all the people involved can make the necessary arrangements. It should also be clear who is responsible for implementing each element. At present the MIITEP training seems to be in disarray because of late provision or non-provision of the necessary resources. Such a schedule of events will go a long way in creating an organised and well-synchronised training programme for each cohort.

While some head teachers had attempted to draw up a schedule of their supervision visits we recommend that these schedules should be comprehensive and made known to other members of staff at the school. The schedules should contain all training activities in a term. These should list for example dates, activities, names of facilitators and students and venues. In particular, training activities such as supervision, assessment, internal workshops and submission of assignments and projects should be included. In the event of a particular activity not taking place, then provision for rescheduling should be made. We believe it is the duty of TDU to suggest achievable supervision targets considering that the qualified teachers are not paid and that they have their own heavy workloads to attend to. Another question that needs to be addressed is how to make sure that the heads do indeed carry out their MIITEP chores as required! The TDU could be asked to draw up a general schedule, based on the school terms, which all should be required to follow; any modifications would have to be agreed with TDU.

2. Training requires a certain basic level of resourcing depending on the level of education in question. We believe that teachers' guides, syllabuses, pupil textbooks, note-books and writing materials are the basic needs of a teacher in the primary school. Lack of these basic resources created a lot of problems for the student teacher. We therefore recommend that these be made available by the managers at either the school level or the zonal level. While it may not be easy to provide such material to all students we suggest that these be procured at least as reference materials in the head teacher's office or in the staff room or at the zonal centre.
3. The design of the MIITEP programme should allow head teachers, PEAs and tutors to collaborate in their efforts as they supervise and assess student teachers. A fragmented approach does not give students coherent direction and sometimes results in conflicting advice.
4. Head teachers and qualified teachers should be made to understand that the school has now become a training ground for teachers and they should therefore be helped to organise the school's resources effectively for the training. At present head teachers have little insight into the possibilities of

arranging training activities in the not-so-well resourced schools; they could be provided with guidelines and examples

5. The number of visits by both PEAs and tutors were far from what had been originally recommended. This shows that these were unrealistic targets set up by TDU. The costs of such visits were almost impossible to be met. Therefore we recommend that PEAs should continue visiting students during the general or clinical supervision funded and planned from the DEO or from the zonal level as the case may be. MIITEP does not need to fund these visits because they are the responsibilities of the DEOs. However the PEAs should realise that these students require extra help in comparison to qualified teachers. With this approach the PEAs will be able to visit the students at least once a term and at most twice a term which translates into at least five times or at most ten times for the entire five terms.

6. In the case of tutors it was clear that their visits were too short to be effective and indeed never took place for many students. This was the most expensive part of the school-based component which can hardly be justified in terms of its effectiveness. We therefore recommend that a country-wide assessment visit be abandoned and a more rationalised plan be identified. This could be in the form of visits to students in a given number of schools surrounding each college. Such an approach would still avail the tutors the opportunity to continue interacting with the primary schools and with their students; they would also continue to get their daily allowances, which appear to be a major consideration as Stuart and Kunje (2000) have shown. Ways that tutors and PEAs could work together with each other and with the heads should be developed.

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