

Increasing Access to Secondary School Education in Malawi: Does private schooling deliver on its promises?

Joseph Chimombo, Elizabeth Meke,
Benjamin Zeitlyn and Keith M. Lewin



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Abstract

This paper provides a new analysis of private secondary education in Malawi. Malawi remains one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with the lowest levels of participation in secondary schooling. As in other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, economic liberalization has led to the development of fee paying private schools to respond to excess demand for places. The paper charts the development of private secondary schooling over the last 20 years, explores the characteristics of households and pupils attending private schools, and illuminates key issues for the future development of the education system arising from changing patterns of provision. The research is based on an analysis of secondary data at national level, insights from a data base on private schools, and empirical case studies in fifteen schools using interviews and a survey of 1000 students.

Key findings are that the private schools are very unevenly distributed geographically, the great majority of children in private secondary schools are from families in the top quintile by wealth in Malawi, the lowest price private schools remain unaffordable to all except the richest households, and enrolments in all but the highest performing schools were stable or declining with much volatility and school transfer from year to year. The governance of private schools varied greatly and most had accountability only to their owners. Teaching staff were often poorly qualified and very transient with high turnover and informal contracts of employment. Learning materials and furniture in most schools in the sample were insufficient to meet minimum standards. The research clearly indicates that there are low limits to the extent that self-financing private schools can contribute to expanding access to secondary schooling in Malawi. The findings of this study have implications for the debate on how best to manage the growth of private for profit schooling at secondary level and how to support expanded access to secondary education in ways that are both equitable and financially sustainable.

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Foreword

This research addresses important questions about the development of private schooling in Malawi at secondary level. There is much current discussion about the role private for profit schools can play in addressing educational needs in poor countries and the analysis and case studies provided in this report illuminate the extent to which this is currently true in one of the poorest countries in Africa.

The study builds directly from research undertaken by CERT ten years ago by a team led by Joseph Chimombo and Keith Lewin. The focus of the study was on non-state educational provision in secondary schools. Specifically, the study explored the extent to which newly established private schools were satisfying the demand for secondary schooling. Among the major findings of the 2005 study were that private schools had grown rapidly from a small base but were of very varied quality. Regulatory mechanisms were unable to cope with the demands placed upon them to ensure new schools met minimum standards and employed appropriate staff.

There were risks that new private schools were competing for the same students who were attending government schools and drawing students from community day secondary schools (CDSS), and that some teaching staff were government school teachers working in more than one school. Volatility was high with schools opening and closing depending on swings in local demand for places. Students also appeared willing to change schools shifting preferences every time examination results were published. Innovations in teaching methods were not observed and classroom practice was targeted narrowly on preparation for examinations.

Most new private schools did not take part in the MOEST's EMIS system, and many were unregistered. This severely constrained efforts for mapping the private school sector and rendered meaningful monitoring of the sector impossible.

Most of the new private schools were owned by individual proprietors or small family businesses who were operating for profit with concerns for maximising margins and economies of scale. The Private Schools Association of Malawi (PRISAM) was formed to lobby on behalf of private school owners and to introduce an element of self-regulation to its registered members to encourage a commitment to the ethical principles and legal and professional standards of conduct with some degree of transparency and accountability.

The national education sector plan (NESP) (MoEST, 2008) projected that rapid increases in enrolment in secondary schooling would be achieved with large increases in private enrolment projected as growth of 90% by 2012, and 230% by 2017. Towards this end, several efforts were made to improve the functioning of the private schooling sector. These efforts included the formation of a national inspectorate of private schools in 2009 by the MoEST whereby many private schools which were deemed not to be meeting the minimum standards required of them were closed down. A new professional group, the Independent Schools Association of Malawi (ISAMA) was established to replace PRISAM.

The international debate about the role of the private sector and of fee charging for profit schools in expanding access to education has become a lively issue for debate since the original study. It is important to illuminate changes in the private school provision in Malawi, the extent to which this has contributed to growth in participation and quality, and the impact of the changes on equity and access for children from for poor households. It speaks to issues that are common to other low income countries confronting policy dilemmas as to how to manage and finance expanded access to secondary schooling.

In 2012 the opportunity arose to revisit the original research as a contribution to the PERI Programme of the OSF. As a result in early 2013 a new research team was established at CERT with Joseph Chimombo, Elizabeth Meke, with Keith Lewin and Benjamin Zeitlyn from the CIE at the University of Sussex. The research was undertaken over the first six months of 2013 using analysis of secondary data, an extended case study sample of private schools, a survey of 1000 students, and interviews with key informants in the schools, Ministry of Education, development agencies, MANEB, ISAMA and the University. This report is the first output from the research project.

Keith Lewin and Benjamin Zeitlyn

Executive Summary

This research report provides an overview of private secondary education in Malawi based on analysis of secondary data and empirical case studies in fifteen schools using interviews and a survey of 1000 students. The case study schools were chosen as mid to low price in terms of the range of fees charged by private schools. These schools were all for profit and were owned by private proprietors operating commercially. The purpose of the research was to update the map of private provision at secondary school level, establish whether the growth in the number of schools in the late 1990s had continued through the 2000s, explore the characteristics of households and pupils attending private schools, and illuminate key issues for the future development of the education system arising from changing patterns of provision.

Private secondary schools now enrol about 25% of all secondary students in Malawi and, after a rapid period of growth from the late 1990s to 2005, have not grown subsequently as fast as was anticipated. They remain lightly regulated and loosely organised with no substantial chains of schools and most operating for profit as small businesses. The attitude of the state to private schools has swung from a *laissez faire* environment in the early 2000s through a period of active inspection and closure of substandard schools in 2009. Some schools have since reopened since and numbers have recovered to the same level as in the mid 2000s but there is currently no appetite for further growth, and some schools have spare capacity.

Private secondary schools in Malawi are not low price in relation to household incomes and the national poverty line. Few outside the top quintile of household income are likely to be enrolled and most will be children from the top decile. Thus these schools are not affordable by the poor. Private schools perform on average better than government community day secondary schools in examinations, but not as well as conventional secondary schools. However, this does not account for any selection effects that exist since private schooling is rationed by price, and high performing public schools are selective. Private secondary schools have more equal gender ratios in terms of the exam candidates they enter than other types of school indicating that the relatively wealthy do not discriminate against their girls for schooling.

The research shows that:

- Most private schools in the sample have no governing boards, poor infrastructure, incomplete records of attendance and achievement, and do not publish accounts. There are high proportions of unqualified teachers and little evidence of innovative teaching methods or breadth in the curriculum beyond that required to perform well in high stakes examinations.
- Learning material, furniture and infrastructure in most schools in the sample fell short of levels necessary for effective learning, though not necessarily worse than in community day secondary schools.
- Private schools in the sample have high staff and student turnover creating a constant flux of people and little stability. Those who fail to pay the fees have to leave school or seek admission to a government school.

- Performance of private schools in examination results covers a wide range and overlaps with that of public secondary schools. On average, students in private schools have a greater chance of university entry than those in community day secondary schools and about the same as conventional secondary schools. However, public schools include a far greater number of candidates from poorer backgrounds.
- Private schools cater mostly for children from top quintile households who have not been able to gain access to government or grant in aid schools. They also attract those who are repeating exams to improve their grades. They do not provide access to quality secondary schooling for the poor and there is no clear evidence that they are innovative, efficient or particularly effective.

This research shows that there are limits to the extent that self-financing private schools can contribute to expanding access to secondary schooling. Malawi remains one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with the lowest levels of participation in secondary schooling. Its future development depends on increasing the proportion of the labour force who successfully complete secondary schooling. The findings of this study have implications for the debate on how best to manage the growth of private for profit schooling at secondary level and how to support expanded access to education.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
CERT	Centre for Educational Research and Training
CIE	Centre for International Education
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
CSS	Conventional Secondary School
DEC	Distance Education Centre
DEM	District Education Manager
DEMIS	District Education Management Statistics
DFID	Department for International Development
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DIAS	Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services
EDPII	Second Education Plan
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
EPDC	Education Policy and Data Centre
ESIP	Education Sector Improvement Plan
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPE	Free Primary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GNI	Gross National Income
GoM	Government of Malawi
GPF	General Purpose Fund
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDRC	Human Development Resource Centre
ISAMA	Independent Schools Association of Malawi
ISASA	Independent Schools Association of South Africa
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
MANEB	Malawi National Examination Board
MCC	Malawi Correspondence College
MCDE	Malawi College of Distance Education
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy

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MK	Malawi Kwacha
MOEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSO	National Statistical Office
ODSS	Open Day Secondary School
PIF	Policy and Investment Framework
PRISAM	Private Schools Association of Malawi
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certification Examination
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
SDI	Staff Development Institute
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIMA	University of Malawi

1. Introduction and Background to the Study

Malawi enrolls a small minority of its school age population in secondary schools. Growing numbers of children have graduated from primary schooling as a result of the free primary education policy, meaning that demand for places in secondary schools has increased. EMIS data shows that in 2002, the year the first FPE cohort graduated, there were 132,220 in standard eight, this number increased to 147,613 in 2006. In 2010 there were 202,036 pupils in Standard 8 but the 2011 EMIS indicated that only 65,541 of these went on to Form 1 (the first year of secondary school) in the 2011 school year (EMIS various years). As efforts are made to improve primary schools, and completion rates go up the demand for secondary schooling will increase. The competition for places at secondary school reflects in part the critical importance of secondary schooling in mediating entrance into the labour market. As is the case in other parts of Sub Saharan Africa, secondary schooling's relationships with poverty reduction, social equity, and economic development have become a key development issue (Government of Malawi, 2007).

Non-state providers of education are seen by some as the solution to expanding educational access in developing countries. Recent literature on this topic includes several synthetic reviews (Heyneman et al. 2011; Patrinos et al. 2009; and HDRC, 2010), collections of case studies such as (Srivastava and Walford, 2007; Phillipson 2008). Much of this literature relates to multiple providers who are involved in education delivery alongside the state (Rose, 2007a; 2007b; Chimombo, 2009; Sabur and Ahmed 2010). Some of it enters into the debate around the political economy of non-state provision in providing Education for All, arguing that non-state providers may help the relatively wealthy but will not be 'the provider of last resort' for the poorest (Lewin 2007; Härmä 2011).

The debate in the international literature is focused on what some contributors call 'low cost' private schools. There is no standard definition of low cost and this description is applied to schools with many different levels of cost in relation to GDP per capita, household income, and average costs in state schools (Nambissan, 2012). What is significant for the poorest is the price they have to pay, not the cost of the service to the provider. Private schools can appear to be low price and low cost to external observers unfamiliar with the economies of low-income countries and typical cost structures. What appears low price in dollar terms may be well beyond the reach of households in the poorer quintiles of income. When data on costs and prices are linked to income distribution and GDP per capita this gives a sense of affordability for the poor. This shows unequivocally that private for profit secondary schools in Malawi are too expensive to be accessed by the poor.

We define private schools as those that are those run for profit rather than schools run by not for profit NGOs. The distinction is important since most recent interest has focussed on the expansion of the for profit sector. Charities, NGOs and religious organisations are important providers of education in many contexts. However, their diversity and the complex mix of motives alongside or instead of profit make them a different proposition to for-profit private schools (Rose, 2009). This research focuses on

for profit private schools and does not cover NGO, religious or grant-aided secondary schools. The number of for profit private schools appears to be increasing from a low base in some poor countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is unclear what upper threshold to their growth is determined by affordability (Lewin, 2007; Noronha and Srivastava, 2013). Private schools that are fee paying and unsubsidised must charge fees sufficient to cover costs and this will always mean there is a threshold of affordability below which some households will find the charges too expensive to bear.

Private schools are perceived by many to be of better quality and higher status than government schools (De et al. 2002). Where there is differentiated demand for competitive advantage private sector schools are often marketed as “international” or English medium, whether or not the claims can be realised. Studies in India, such as Tooley and Dixon (2005) argue that even very poor people, including dalits and adivasis, are paying to send their children to for profit private schools, which are staffed by unqualified teachers, receiving very low wages. Other studies contradict this picture and provide evidence that the poorest remain excluded in India (Härmä 2011). Tooley’s work in India and Ghana, argues that for profit private schools provide a systemic alternative to state education to extend education to poor and marginalized communities, but provides no evidence that such systematic approaches exist on scale or are sustainable. The question remains as to whether the broader evidence can support this kind of ideologically driven advocacy, and whether it has any evidential base especially outside the special circumstances of areas that are densely populated with high proportions of displaced internal and cross border migrants lacking civil rights. In large part, evidence on for profit schools in developing country is patchy, unconvincing, not independent of vested interests, or independently corroborated, much of it suffers from a number of obvious biases. For example, if data is collected from those who have already chosen private schools for their children, then perceptions are conditioned by the selection effects inevitable at asking parents to rationalise choices they have already made.

Proponents of private schooling in developing countries argue that private provision of public services such as education has the following principal benefits:

- Competition in the market for education leading to improved performance on achievement tests
- Autonomy in school management leading to more efficient use of resources
- Improved standards through performance related contracts for teachers
- Risk-sharing between government and providers (Patrinos et al. 2009).

This research examines these claims for the benefits of private schooling. An analysis of school locations, the socio-economic background of pupils in for profit private schools and the fees charged in different types of private and public secondary schools examines competition in the market for secondary education in Malawi. Case studies of 15 for profit private schools explore management structures and practices. Analysis of secondary data on performance (output), observations of infrastructure, standards and of teaching staff (inputs) in case study schools, provide insights into standards and the quality of education. Analysis of the business model, financing of private schools, the regulatory framework, explores whether there really is risk sharing, as well as the profitability and the governance of private schools. The research contributes to the debate about the private provision of public services, specifically secondary schooling, in developing countries.

1.1 A Typology of Secondary schools

In this research we refer to four types of government schools and four types of private schools. Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) are the cheapest and least selective of the government secondary schools, and they educate the majority of students in secondary school in Malawi. Although these schools were supposed to be integrated with other government secondary schools, in reality, many CDSS continue to operate with very high PTRs, and very few learning resources.

Conventional Secondary Schools (CSS) are the old core of the government secondary system. They are more selective and expensive than CDSS. Among the CSS are a smaller group of national secondary schools, which are the highest quality of government provision. They are typically well-established boarding schools, which often started as mission or religious schools. There are a number of very high quality girls national boarding schools.

The system of Open Day Secondary Schools (ODSS) is a parallel system to the provision of secondary education in Malawi. They run in the existing structures of a secondary school. EMIS data indicate that there were 12,879 learners in ODSS in 2011, although only 1,265 ODSS students sat for their MSCE and 894 for the JCE in that year according to MANEB data. Chimombo (2010) reveals that there are a lot of teething issues in the operation of ODSS. These schools attract extra income to teachers (because teachers are paid per hour) and therefore there is tendency to hide the real numbers of students involved (Chimombo, 2010).

Four types of private schools can be identified based on fee levels as well as ownership. 'Dwelling house schools' established in or adjacent to proprietors' homes have drastically reduced in number following the 2009 crackdown. Private entrepreneurs own these types of schools. They are usually small, have unstable enrolments and teachers who have informal contracts, and few if any resources.

Second, there are business entrepreneurs who own and run private schools in buildings that are purpose built. These 'for profit private schools' have facilities of varying quality. The costs and quality of these schools varies widely. They include very good schools operating efficiently, providing a good education for a reasonable price as well as schools that are dirty and dangerous for learners and are clearly focused on maximizing profits rather than quality education. These schools also include day, boarding and mixed provision schools. This is the category of schools that we focus our study on.

Third, are mission and church owned and run private schools, which tend to be well established and equipped. These schools have reputations that attract higher fee students and stable teaching forces with more normal employment contracts. Many of these schools are 'grant aided' meaning that a substantial proportion of running costs, usually teacher salaries, are provided by the state. The state also controls teacher recruitment and deployment. Some of these schools have opted out of the grant-aided arrangement and become wholly private, ('mission private') these usually operate in the high-cost, high quality end of the spectrum of private schools.

Finally there are a small number of high cost, high quality, international private schools which attract both Malawian and foreign students and have excellent facilities and well

paid, fully qualified teaching staff. Students in these schools often sit for British or International Baccalaureate exams and typically go to university outside Malawi.

These schools cater for those unable or unwilling to attend government secondary schools, but for very different reasons. In all categories of secondary school, including government secondary schools, fees must be paid. In the first two categories of private school described, students are mainly those who have failed to gain entrance into a selective government secondary school or have some other reason for not wanting to attend. This might be that they are disillusioned with the quality of government schools, have had a bad experience in school and/or want to retake public examinations. In the second two categories of private schools the decision to go to private school is motivated more by quality and social reasons, with the wealthiest choosing high cost elite education options. There is not a clear-cut distinction between private and public in terms of funding because government schools charge fees. All schools, regardless of type are supposed to register with the government, which regulates all schools except for the international schools. The following table summarises the categorisation of the secondary schools as used in this study.

Table 1 — *Categorising school types*

School Type/ Characteristics		Conventional	CDSS	Grant Aided	International private	For profit private	Mission Private	Dwelling House
Funding	State	✓	✓	✓				
	Non-state	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ownership	State	✓	✓					
	Non-state			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regulation	State	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Non-state				✓	✓	✓	✓

1.2 Research Questions

The broad research question is:

- What is the role of private providers in changing patterns of secondary enrolment in Malawi?

To answer this we proposed a number of sub-questions:

1. How have policies, processes and practices of registration, regulation and governance of non-government schools changed since 2005?
2. Is there now better data on the number of non-government schools at primary and secondary level, enrolments in them and performance by their students?
3. If so:
 - a. How are private schools managed and run?
 - b. How many private schools are registered and what proportion of the total is this estimated to be?

- c. How many non-government schools have closed or how long does the average non-government school operate for?
 - d. What are the patterns of enrolment by gender?
 - e. What are the pattern of performance by school type and gender?
 - f. What are the patterns of location of private schools by urban/rural status or region?
 - g. Do private secondary schools cater to the poor?
 - h. What is the proportion of primary and secondary students being educated by non-government providers in 2013?
4. What types of public-private partnerships exist?
 5. What is the infrastructure and standards like in private schools?
 6. What schools do private schools compete with?
 7. Who teaches in private schools, under what conditions?
 8. How are private schools financed?

1.3 Methods

Research consisted of case studies of 15 for profit private secondary schools as well as analysis of secondary data. Research was managed in Malawi by CERT, who collected recent data sets, which were analysed jointly by the research team. Once these analyses were done, trends and patterns emerged from the data and these were investigated through interviews and case studies. The use of different methods at different levels helps to triangulate findings and explain the trends identified in secondary data analysis. Schools included in case studies were contacted and asked to give their consent for participation in the research, and then visited. Each case study involved a number of methods collecting data on enrolment, attendance, performance, teachers, facilities, ownership and financing. This was complemented by interviews and focus groups with learners and teachers.

1.4 Case Studies Methods and Sampling

This study targeted private secondary schools in three districts: Zomba, Blantyre and Dedza. The districts were purposively sampled based on the enrolment rates. Blantyre had the highest and Dedza the lowest enrolment rate in the country. Zomba was conveniently sampled because it is where the research institution that carried out the study is located.

15 for profit private secondary schools were chosen from these three districts. These were selected using the following criteria: They were teaching Forms 1-4, are entirely private, receiving no state subsidy or grant and not being allied to or supported by a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), religious organisation or charity. Lower price schools were prioritised. Higher price private secondary schools including grant aided and elite private secondary schools as well as 'dwelling house schools' were excluded.

Case studies used a range of research methods. At each school, five instruments were used:

- A school checklist that was administered to the head teacher,
- Semi-structured interviews with two teachers (from Form 1 and Form 4),
- Focus group discussions with boys and girls in Forms 1 and 4,
- An infrastructure checklist on the quality and condition of infrastructure and processes taking place at the school,
- A questionnaire for all learners in Forms 1 and 4.

The checklist collected quantitative data on the ownership and management of the school, admissions, enrolments, dropouts, learner migration, learner performance, teacher qualifications, teacher salaries, infrastructure and financial issues. Interviews with teachers focussed on their reasons for teaching at the school, salaries and conditions of work and the characteristics of learners at the school. Focus group discussions investigated the experiences of learners in the schools, their views on teaching and learning and on why they had chosen to study at the school. The infrastructure checklist helped to standardise the analysis of the facilities in schools.

The learner questionnaire gathered quantitative data on the socio-economic background of learners and the schooling history of family members. It also collected data on the provision of textbooks and furniture to learners. At each sampled school, all Form 1 and Form 4 learners were asked to respond to the questionnaire. The Form 1 learners were targeted because we felt they could give an objective impression of the school, as they were relatively new at the school while the Form 4 learners were included in the sample of respondents because of their wider experiences about what goes on at the school. In addition it was felt that the experiences and views of Form 1 and Form 4 learners might be different. In each class, research assistants helped the learners to fill in the questionnaire by clarifying any confusion with the questions to ensure accuracy and completeness of the questions.

Total respondents to the learner questionnaire were 998 of which 507 were boys while 491 were girls, 507 respondents were from Form 4 and 491 were from Form 1 (Table 2). There was little difference in enrolment in Form 1 and Form 4 suggesting that there had not been significant growth over the last four years.

Table 2—*Respondents to the learner questionnaire*

	Form 1	Form 4	Total
Boys	239	268	507
Girls	252	239	491
Total	491	507	998

The gender balance of the sample was fairly even. Although there were slightly more girls in Form 1 than boys and slightly more boys than girls in Form 4, the differences were not statistically significant.

1.5 Research Process

Two principal researchers were involved in the data collection, along with four research assistants. The research team split into two teams comprising one principal researcher and two research assistants in each team. At each school, the team introduced itself to the head teacher and made logistical arrangements for the data collection process at the school. The research assistants administered the learner questionnaire. The research assistants conducted separate focus group discussions with selected learners from the two forms. The learners were selected randomly from the class and constituted five boys and five girls from each class. Focus groups for boys and girls were held separately, so in each case study school, four focus groups were held: Form 1 boys, Form 1 girls, Form 4 boys and Form 4 girls.

The principal researcher administered the school checklist to the head teacher and interviewed teachers. The data collection exercise at the school ended with a 'look around' of the school premises and environment to complete the infrastructure checklist. The whole data collection process at each school took place in one day. Chapter 5 is based on insights from case studies.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The number of cases that could be covered was constrained by time, resources, and geographic location. This meant that the small sample chosen for case studies cannot be regarded as representative. While some information about private schools, such as their fees are widely publicised, others are not. There is sensitivity as a result of a crackdown on unregistered schools operating in poor quality premises with unqualified teachers that took place in 2009. This has led to reluctance to divulge information about the level of qualification of teachers and the number of teachers, including the salaries they receive as the Ministry of Education now uses these as minimum requirements for establishing a school. The finances of schools are shrouded in secrecy, many proprietors use their own personal bank accounts for school finances, do not appear to keep accurate records of financial transactions, deal mainly in cash and there do not appear to be any audited accounts available.

This made it difficult to calculate the income and expenditure of the schools; nevertheless rough estimates of income and expenditure were made from the data that was collected. In some of the schools staffing and enrolments were unstable with considerable changes from year to year. In some schools data and records were not kept properly and/or were unavailable. This made it difficult to construct a picture over time of trends in areas such as enrolment and performance. Lastly, self-reported performance data often seemed unreliable and exaggerated to give a favourable impression of achievements especially in cases where tangible documentation was not available. Where possible we have triangulated data given to us by schools with exam board, EMIS, University of Malawi and observational data.

1.7 Secondary Data Analysis

Secondary data analysis focused on five databases using them in combination with each other and the learner survey:

- Malawi EMIS 2011 and 2012
- Malawi DHS 2010
- MANEB data from 2002-2012
- University of Malawi entrance data from 2010
- ISAMA membership data

Using these databases we have analysed trends and patterns of enrolment and performance. EMIS data was either taken directly from annual reports or analysed with SPSS. MANEB data with grades by subject was recorded into four categories of 1 for distinction (1–2), 2 for credit (3–6), 3 for pass (7–8) and 9 for fail. Secondly, based on MANEB coding, we were able to record the files with the total number of entrants (JCE and MSCE) into three categories. These were internal, external and open or ODL. Finally, in order to categorize entrants to the University of Malawi, each student's school was coded by school type for analysis.

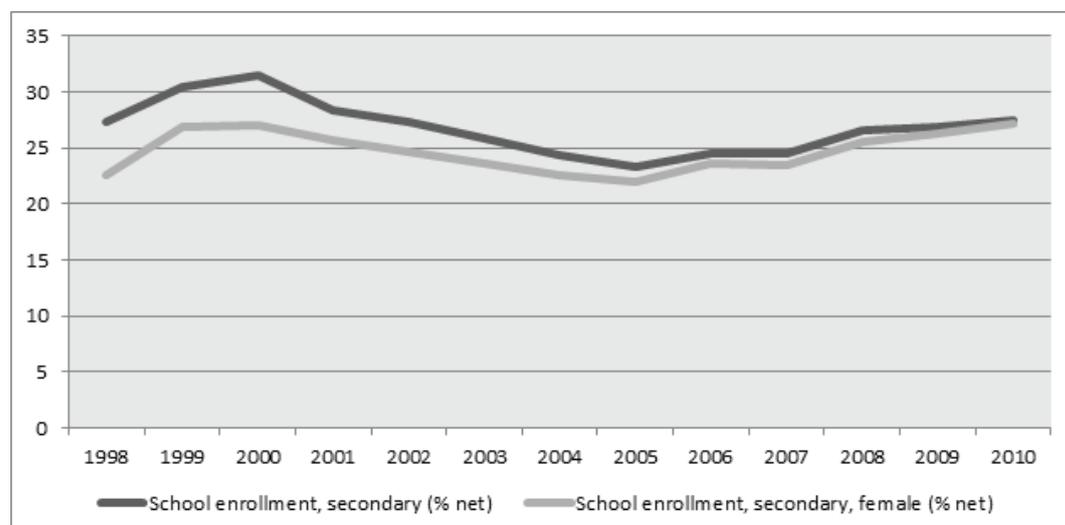
2. Review of Policy and Practice on Secondary Schooling

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a brief history of secondary schooling in Malawi. It reviews policy developments since independence, focusing upon policy documents that have shaped the development of secondary education since democratisation in 1994. The legal framework of education in Malawi is based on the 1962 Education Act. Malawi's constitution defines the nation's educational objectives and regulates the sharing of responsibilities for education among the three key players—the state, religious groups and the private sector. Religious groups control a large proportion (about 60%) of the primary schools, and many secondary schools. About 25% of secondary schools are conventional government schools, 49% are Community Day Secondary Schools, 25% are private with less than 1% registered as open schools. Malawi has one of the lowest participation rates in secondary schooling in Africa. Primary enrolments expanded from about 1.8 million to nearly 3 million as an immediate consequence of the introduction of free primary education after 1994. This increase in enrolments is beginning to be reflected in the numbers seeking access to secondary schooling. Against this backdrop of limited supply and increased demand, private secondary education in Malawi has grown since 1994.

After increasing enrolments from 1994, secondary school participation declined, reaching its lowest level in 2005. After 2005 a steady increase seems to have been driven by increases in female participation in secondary schools reaching virtual parity in 2010. Girls in all school types in Malawi performed worse than boys in the national MSCE exams in 2000 (Lewin and Sayed, 2005:86).

Figure 1—*Secondary net enrolment in Malawi*



Exam performance is linked to the type of school attended, with the Conventional Government Secondary Schools (CSS) performing better than private schools and

Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS). Females performed worse than males in the exams, particularly in the CDSS. Most CDSS students do not pass the MSCE exams, which have become the minimum requirement for most formal sector jobs (Kadzamira, 2003:16). A pass with unexceptional performance in the exam will prevent entry into the public university system, entry to which is selected based on exam results. Low performance by females in the MSCE exam means that there are less female students in the university (Kadzamira, 2003:17). Exam performance is closely related to subsequent income, those that passed with credit or above in the MSCE exam had higher mean incomes than those who failed or who had an ordinary pass. Incomes were higher among waged employees than self-employed people (Kadzamira, 2003:54)

The broad policy objective for education is to develop an “efficient” and high quality system of education of a type and size appropriate both to the available resources and to the political, social and economic aspirations of the nation. A number of documents describe the development goals and strategies for national development and/or education development in Malawi. Some of these documents are discussed in this chapter.

2.2 The First Education Plan (1973)

The first education plan in Malawi was a product of the Johnson (1964) Report, which among other things recommended an expansion of secondary education. Policy in newly independent Malawi linked education, particularly at post-primary level, to the demands of the labour market rather than population growth. The First Education Plan was very cautious of a rapid increase in post primary education due to the perception that this would lead to a fall in standards (Government of Malawi 1973:53). This concern remains current. After a decision was made to liberalise the secondary sector in 1994 and allow more private participation, complaints continued about the declining quality of education. Initially, the pressure for expansion was largely absorbed by growth in the MCDE system, which was also of low quality (Rose 2005).

The first education plan was limited in that it did not cover all levels of the formal education system. The 1973-80 plan was, however, useful as a first real attempt to plan a modern education system for the country. During the mid-1980s, there was some evidence that the plan was not a great success. The reasons were not clear because there was no evaluation of the plan. Mwale believes that the plan started with flaws, having no specific budget and poor management (Mwale 1998:xv).

2.3 The Second Education Plan (1985)

The second education plan 1985-95 (EDPII) began to shift the emphasis away from post-secondary education in favour of primary education. It sought to improve access, quality and efficiency, particularly at the primary level. EDPII set a target to achieve a primary NER of 85% by 1995. This was to be achieved by a gradual phasing out of school fees, but by 1993/94, the GER was estimated at 70%. At the secondary level, the aim of the EDPII was to keep secondary school education opportunities geared to serving economic development rather than responding to demand (Republic of Malawi, 1985:5).

However, just like the first education plan, EDPII did not have the financial resources and project monitors to facilitate its successful implementation. Its evaluation indicated that quality, efficiency and access did not significantly improve. A shortage of teachers and learning materials, high dropout and repetition rates greatly affected the effectiveness and efficiency of the system (Mwale and Chimombo, 1994).

2.4 The Free Primary Education Policy (FPE) (1994)

The new democratic government of Malawi introduced FPE in 1994. The previous government had, in accordance with the Jomtien Declaration, introduced a school fee waiver scheme during the second half of the EDPII period. However, after winning the elections in 1994, the UDF-led government followed through on its political promise to provide education for all Malawians. In this major policy intervention, the fees abolished included tuition, school fund/extra fees and textbook contribution. In some cases, especially in urban areas, it also meant the abolition of other fees such as telephone and water fees. A uniform no longer became a requirement for attending school (MoE, 1996). The policy also contemplated the introduction of community schools in order to expand secondary education. The FPE policy also merged into one category assisted (those under the responsibility of local education authorities at the district level) and unassisted schools (those established by local communities). The central government assumed the responsibility of financing these schools (MoE, 1995).

2.5 Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) (1995)

While previous plans were criticised for lacking a clear budget allocation, the sector-wide Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) for education in 1995 detailed for the first time how to support expanded access to education. The PIF included a specific aim of supporting good quality non-government secondary schools to complement public provision. The PIF envisaged 10% of primary and 25% of secondary student being educated by non-government providers by 2012. Lewin and Sayed point to significant gaps in the PIF, in terms of frameworks to develop, support, regulate, monitor and evaluate non-government providers (Lewin and Sayed, 2005:73). A review of the initial PIF revealed that the document was not based on thorough and comprehensive data and analyses (Kirby et al. 1998). Bernbuam et al. (1998) observed further that although a great deal of effort during the development of the PIF went into developing a set of budget scenarios outlining the consequences of different decisions on funding requirements for education, the Government of Malawi did not use these projections. One of the major differences in the second version of the PIF and indeed from the previous two education development plans was the emphasis that, the context of policy planning and education was of vital importance (GOM, 1998:2).

2.6 The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) (2008)

Malawi has developed a National Education Sector Plan (NESP), in collaboration with development partners, to stipulate the MoE's vision, mission, strategic objectives and core values. The NESP outlines sector-wide educational development for a ten-year

period (2008-2017) and draws on the first and second education development plans, the PIF and the Long-term Development Perspective for Malawi (Vision 2020). The NESP projects rapid increases in enrolment (50% increase from 2007 to 2012, and 130% increase from 2007 to 2017) in secondary schooling. This would be obtained by a 30% increase in enrolment in Government-supported schools to 2012 and 90% to 2017, an increase in enrolment in Open Schools from nearly 7,000 in 2007 to 19,000 in 2012 and 34,000 in 2017, and increases in private enrolment of 90% by 2012 and 230% by 2017 (NESP 2008:17). However, until there is an effective engagement with the private sector and regulatory framework, it is difficult to see how private provision can be the answer to increasing access to quality secondary schooling in poor Malawi (Chimombo, 2009).

2.7 The CDSS Policy Reform (1999)

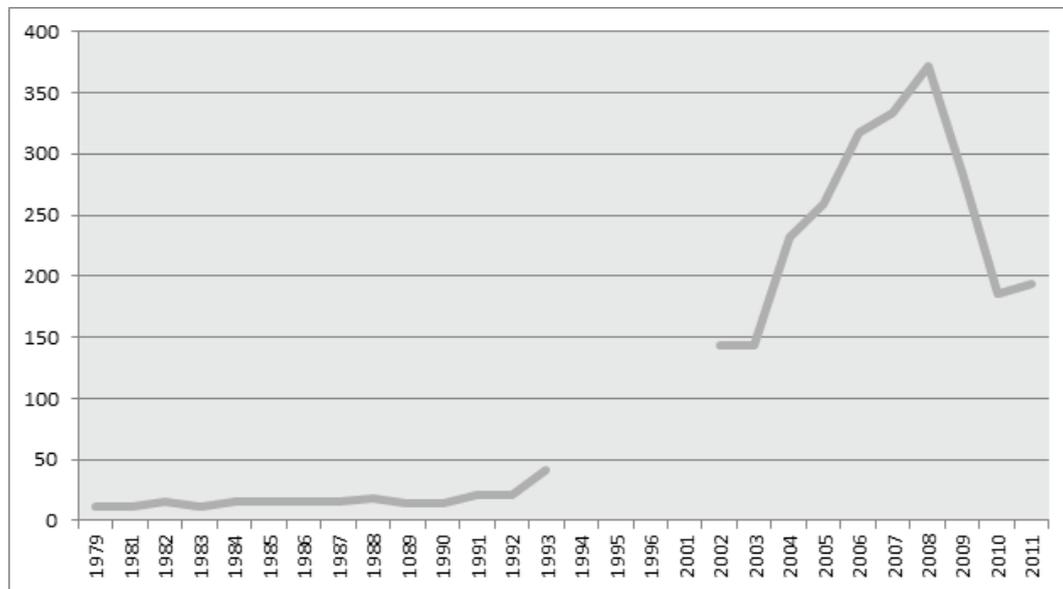
The Ministry of Education directed the conversion of DECs to CDSSs in January 1999. The aim of this policy was to bring DECs into the mainstream of secondary education. However, it has become clear that CDSSs are given a lower status when compared to other secondary schools (Chinseu-Moyo, 2008). Gwede (2004) conducted a study to examine if the implementation of this policy ensured improvement of quality education in CDSSs. The results of the study showed that CDSS were lacking qualified teachers, libraries and laboratories and had poor infrastructure. Another study was conducted by Mac Jessie-Mbewe (2004), to understand students', teachers' and parents' perspectives of the conversion of DECs to CDSSs, and student access to secondary education. The study reported that most of the teachers in CDSS were not qualified and that teaching and learning materials were not available, contributing to poor quality education in these schools. Chakwera's (2002) study on teachers' and parents' perceptions of the secondary education unification policy also concluded that the status of CDSSs was lower than that of CSSs. Although the aim of the unification policy was to improve quality, the poor and uneven implementation of the policy has meant that CDSSs are not near the conventional secondary schools in terms of quality (Chinseu-Moyo, 2008).

2.8 Private Schools in Malawi and the Independent Schools Association of Malawi (ISAMA)

After democratization in 1994, and the conversion of DECs into CDSSs, there was an increase in the number of private schools in Malawi. Figure 2 shows the growth of private schools. The number of schools does not necessarily track the number of children enrolled. Many private schools are smaller than government schools. The chart shows the number of schools registered and does not indicate the level of turnover with schools opening and closing.

The decrease in the number of private schools after the government inspection of 2009 is notable. It is likely that this decrease is driven both by actual closures of schools that did not meet the minimum standards and by private schools refusing to reply to EMIS questionnaires in protest at government regulation.

Figure 2—Number of private schools in Malawi



Source: EMIS and MANEB data

ISAMA—the Independent Schools Association of Malawi, was formed in 2009 after a power struggle in the Private Schools Association of Malawi (PRISAM), which ousted the president who had been accused of corruption. The corruption scandal involved the purchase of computers from the UK, tarnished the reputation of the organisation and caused divisions within PRISAM. The British Council had been supporting PRISAM but withdrew support after the corruption scandal¹. The new president decided to change the name to ISAMA as the PRISAM name was tarnished by the corruption scandal, and to emphasise the notion of ‘independent’ schools rather than ‘private’ schools, as it “takes away the spirit of making a huge profit”.

According to its data, ISAMA has 360 secondary school and 370 primary school members. The association offers advice to private school owners and head teachers, a measure of regulation, networking opportunities, advocacy on behalf of private schools, and AIDS clubs in schools. However, ISAMA’s main challenge is how to consolidate the private sector and be seen once again as the regulatory body that PRISAM was. Some proprietors of the private schools we visited indicated that they viewed ISAMA as a rebel organisation and considered themselves as still belonging to PRISAM.

The number of private schools went down dramatically after a national inspection of private schools and the closing down of private schools that did not meet minimum standards set by the ministry in 2009. The Department of Inspectorate and Advisory Services (DIAS) of the Ministry of Education led this ‘crackdown’. Parents were complaining about some schools that were acting in an unscrupulous way, charging fees but providing very poor quality education. Among other stipulations, the minimum

1. Interview with President of ISAMA

requirements stated that schools must be in purpose built buildings, and have a minimum of 50% qualified teachers.

The number of private schools reduced from around 370 to 185 in 2009 and is now back up to around 200. This is due to the school closures, underreporting and also the poor economic situation, meaning that parents could not afford fees. In addition, many people were afraid to send their children to private schools in that time, fearing that they could be shut down. ISAMA leadership described the crackdown in 2009 as a terrible time. They complained to the ministry about the poor conditions of some CDSS schools and succeeded in closing one down after complaints. Previous studies such as Lewin and Sayed (2005) and British Council (2001) had noted the poor quality in many private schools before 2009. Many private schools operated in environments that are far from satisfactory such as beer halls, private residences and barns (SDI 2001:1).

Private schools in Malawi have vague and confusing governance as there is no provision for them in the (1962) Education Act. All individuals and organisations wishing to open private schools under licence have to apply to the Secretary for Education through their respective Division Education Office prior to the registration of pupils and the actual opening of the proposed school premises. MoE will visit the proposed premises of the new school to meet the proprietors to ensure that the basic minimum requirements are fulfilled. Many schools however do not have a licence or pay tax, and it is impossible to know how many unregistered schools like this there are. This process is now the responsibility of The Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS)—which manages school inspection.

The economic conditions in Malawi are hard for private schools (as well as other businesses). Private schools find it hard to raise finance; Bank Loans are dependent on having collateral—such as owning the land that the school is built on. A bank called the Opportunity International Bank of Malawi, a US owned microfinance institution, has lent money to private schools without collateral, but the interest rates are very high, at 50% with fees. This makes the loans very difficult to pay off. Some ISAMA members entered into these loan schemes as a group, using the association as a guarantor. A few members took loans and most of them got into financial difficulties and had to sell their schools. This was partly due to the high interest rates but also to do with the timing where the scheme operated at the same time as enrolments fell due to the crackdown and economic crisis.

ISAMA schools are divided into bands by fees as presented in Table 3 below. Table 3 is actually two tables brought together. The section on the left of the black column includes data on private school bands, fees and teacher salaries. The section to the right of the black column includes government school types and their fees. They are brought together, as this illustrates how private school fee bands map directly onto the different types of government schools, indicating different markets at different levels.

Table 3 — *Private school (ISAMA) (on the left) and government school fee bands (on the right)*

Band of private secondary school	Tuition fee per term	ISAMA membership fee per year	Private school teachers' salaries	Type of Government Secondary School	Tuition fees charged per term
A	MK 5,000–10,000 (\$12–25)	MK10,000 (\$25)	MK14,500–30,000 (\$36–75)	CDSS	MK3,000 (\$7.5)
B	MK10,000–20,000 (\$25–50)	MK20,000 (\$50)	MK35,000–45,000 (\$88–113)	ODS	MK5,000 (\$12.5)
C	MK20,000–35,000 (\$50–88)	MK35,000 (\$88)	MK35,000–45,000 (\$88–113)	CSS	MK20,000 (\$500)
D	35,000 and above (\$88 and above)	MK50,000 (\$125)	MK 35,000–120,000 (\$88–300)	Grant Aided	MK35,000 (\$88)

Most private schools, and all apart from one of the schools we focus on in this research, are in bands A and B. These four bands of schools correspond to the four categories outlined earlier in terms of the quality of provision, infrastructure and the market that they enter into. They also map directly onto the types of government school provision. The band A and B schools that this study focuses on have annual fees which range from \$13-\$50 per year. Average GNI per capita is \$320 per year (World Bank 2013), so it is clear that fees in this range, the lowest available for private secondary education, are unaffordable to the vast majority of families. In most surveys of household expenditure it is unusual for more than 10% of household income to be allocated to education. Schools often charge more for boarding and a range of other fees such as uniform, food, exam fess, registration fees, and a general purpose fund (GPF).

According to ISAMA, chains of private schools are not common in Malawi. The largest chain had three schools. This was put down to a problem of trust. “Parents want to see that the owner of the school is personally involved/invested in the school and that they are present regularly” a head teacher from ISAMA observed. It was reported that there were Zimbabwean and Zambian owners of schools in Malawi, and a Nigerian owns one of the case study schools.

Speaking about the children in private schools, both ISAMA as well as the schools visited outlined how the best students go to the government conventional secondary schools, national secondary schools and grant aided secondary schools, which are highly selective, high performing and cheaper than private schools of the same quality. “The problems with our schools is that we have to deal with the leftovers—the government schools take all the cream” an interviewee from ISAMA observed. Most students in private schools are children from the top quintile of the population by wealth who were not selected for the best government schools, but were selected either for low quality CDSS schools or not selected at all.

2.9 Summary

The review above shows that as the demand for more secondary education increased, private schools were founded alongside government providers. Despite planning for

increased private sector involvement in education provision, there is still an absence of a coherent and enforceable legal framework for private sector provision. The 2009 national inspection seems to have been a one off event; there is still no on-going, sustainable institutional forum that should genuinely guide the development of private education in Malawi. Paradoxically, it is not only new private schools that have been established with little or no regulation or adherence to established norms. The same is also true of the majority of the CDSS. There has been little effective regulation and monitoring of the CDSS, and many have conditions similar to those found in for profit private schools. In principle, all formal institutions, whether public or private, should be required to adhere to national policies, norms, standards and regulations, and the government should monitor and regulate all institutions.

Another important pattern that emerges is the exclusive nature of secondary education in Malawi. The costs involved in terms of fees, exclude all but the wealthiest Malawians. The limited supply of secondary schooling is therefore rationed by ability to pay and performance in national exams. The wealthiest people in Malawi can afford to send their children to high cost international private schools, which do not select by performance. For the rest, very good performance in exams can lead to entry to high quality public schools, which also charge fees. Those who do not get into these schools, are selected for conventional and CDSS. Those who do not get selected for these, or who do not want to attend CDSS but can afford to pay, opt for the private for profit secondary schools that this study focuses upon.

3. Supply and Demand for Secondary Education in Malawi

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out some of the background to the supply and demand for secondary education in Malawi. The chapter describes secondary provision in the country and examines primary enrolment patterns that have implications for secondary level demand. It also examines the budgetary allocations and limits to affordability of secondary education in the country.

3.2 Secondary Education—Supply and Access

Secondary school education in Malawi begins after the eight-year primary education cycle, and consists of a junior and senior cycle. The official entry age into secondary school is 13 years. Entry into government secondary schools is selective; it is based on the results of the Primary School Leavers Certificate Examination (PSLCE). The PSLCE, and similar secondary exams JCE, and MSCE are standardized national exams designed and assessed by the Ministry of Education and the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB). MANEB awards students a grade and a rating of “pass” or “fail” based on their scores.

Using MANEB data from 2004 and 2005, De Hoop (2010) explains how the selection procedures work. In 2004 there were 150,748 pupils who sat the PSLCE, of whom 94,789 passed. The ministry of education could offer 39,090 of those who passed a place in a government secondary school for the 2005 school year. In order to select 39,090 students from among the 94,789 who passed the Ministry of Education uses PSLCE performance the selection criterion. Based on students’ PSLCE scores, the selection team in the Ministry of Education selects pupils into national, conventional or community day secondary schools.

In 2005, national boarding schools had spaces for 718 male and 773 female pupils. The ministry selection team selected the top 718 male students and the top 773 female students into national boarding schools. In deciding which school the pupils go to the selection team selects pupils into the national boarding school closest to their primary school. Conventional secondary school and community day secondary school entry is determined at the district, rather than national level. For day schools, which have no boarding facilities distance is also a key consideration (De Hoop 2010). High stakes, competitive exams at the end of primary school control entry to the government secondary sector. The MSCE exam at the end of secondary schooling is also a key competitive exam which determines entry to universities and jobs.

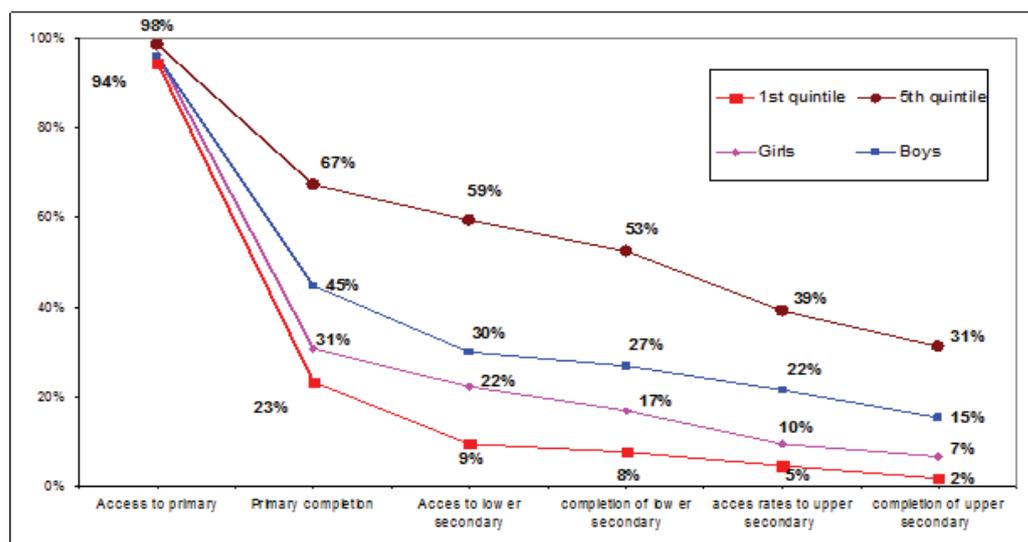
The junior cycle consist of the first two years of secondary education (Forms 1 and 2) after which students sit for the JCE. The majority of students who pass this examination continue to senior secondary education, also consisting of two years (Forms 3 and 4). Malawi has had one of the lowest participation rates in secondary schooling in Africa. It is only recently that gross enrolment rates (GER) have exceeded 30%. Transition rates

into secondary schools have been low with between 65 and 80% of primary school leavers making the transition to lower secondary school (UIS 2013).

Gender disparities in access and attainment are pronounced at post primary levels. In 1995, girls constituted 39% of the total secondary school enrolment (MoE 1995). In 2011, the figure was 34% (World Bank, 2013). Research suggests that the family background of secondary school pupils differ markedly. Parents of girls attending secondary school education are better educated and are of a higher socio-economic status than parents of boys (Chimombo, 1999).

One of the determinants of transition and persistence in secondary school is the socio-economic status and indeed the poverty level of the household. Poverty levels in Malawi are high, 52% of the Malawian population is living below the national poverty line and 74% below the PPP \$1.25 per day poverty line (UNDP 2013:160). With these high poverty levels, it is very difficult for most families to find any level of tuition fees for their children’s post primary education. Where choices have to be made in cases where parents can only afford to send one child to school; research suggests that they will send a son rather than a daughter, assuming that an educated son will earn more in the labour market than an educated daughter (Scharf, 2007). Figure 3 depicts education status in terms of access and persistence in schooling.

Figure 3 — *Schooling by gender and socio-economic group*



Source: MoEST (2009b:130)

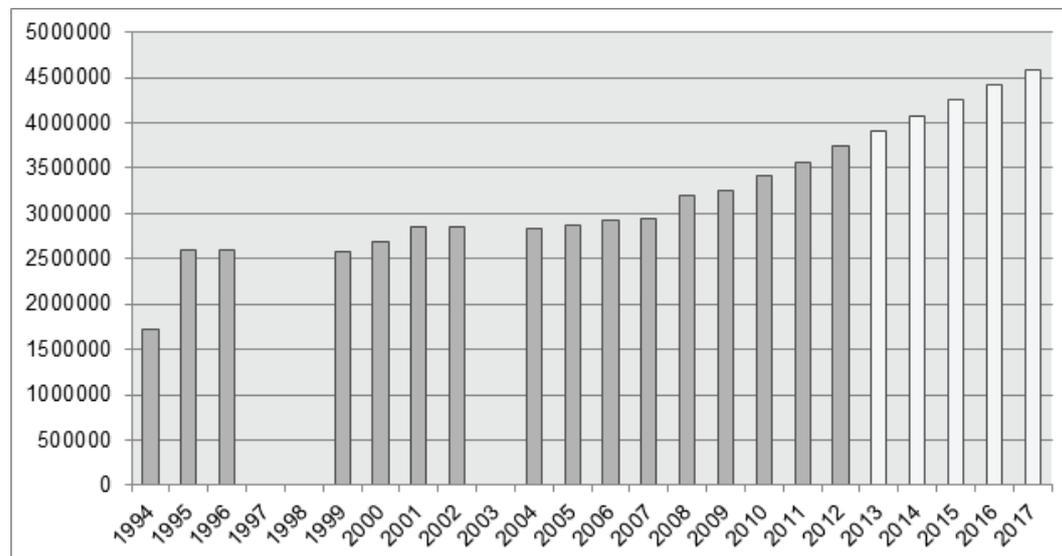
Figure 3 shows that only 31% of girls complete primary compared to 45% of boys. 22% of girls get access to lower secondary education compared to 30% of boys. At the end of the secondary cycle, there are only 7% of girls and 15% of boys remaining in school. These graphs indicate that girls do not have the same opportunities in terms of completing primary or secondary education. The graph also shows the huge disparity between the top quintile and bottom quintile of Malawian households, which is much wider than the gender disparity in the graph. While 59% of the top quintile by wealth access secondary school and 31% complete it, only 9% of learners from the lowest quintile get into secondary school and only 2% complete it.

3.3 The Demand for Secondary Schooling in Malawi

Free Primary Education was introduced in Malawi in 1994. Primary enrolments increased from about 1.8 million to over 2.9 million in less than two years. Analysis of transition to secondary in Malawi shows that while many children find a place in primary schools, the majority of these are denied a chance to continue to secondary school. In 1994 for example, 1,006,194 pupils finished Standard 1. However, at the end of the primary cycle, seven years later, only 160,361 of these finished Standard 8 and 40,781 students (4.05%) were registered in Form 1 (MoE, 2002). The NESP projected that a rapid increase in enrolment would be obtained by a 30% increase in enrolment in Government-supported schools by 2012 and 90% by 2017, an increase in enrolment in Open Schools from nearly 7,000 in 2007 to 19,000 in 2012 and 34,000 in 2017, and increases in private enrolment of 90% by 2012 and 230% by 2017. Overall, the Government would maintain a 50:50 male to female ratio for secondary school places. These projections are based more on aspiration than underlying trends.

Future enrolment can be projected from primary enrolment data. This uses assumptions consistent with the Ministry of Education’s policies on reducing repetition and drop out. In brief this assumes that repetition and drop out will fall to no more than about 5% throughout the primary system. The age cohort is assumed to grow at about 2%, which is consistent with data from the 2008 Census. Figure 4 shows primary enrolments since 1994 (in grey) and projected enrolments (in white) based on UNESCO data until 2017.

Figure 4 — Malawi primary enrolments and projections 1994–2017



Source: World Bank (2013) and EPDC (2013)

3.4 The Limits of Affordability

52% of the Malawian population is living below the national poverty line and 74% below the PPP \$1.25 per day poverty line (UNDP 2013:160). This is the equivalent in October 2013 of a person having an annual income per person of MK175,074 (\$438) 74% of Malawians have less. The national poverty line defines a person as poor if they live

in a household where annual per capita income is less than MK37,002 (\$93), 52% of Malawians have less (Republic of Malawi, 2012). It seems clear that no family below the national poverty line, more than half the population, would ever be able to afford the costs of a single child attending any form of fee-paying secondary school.

The average family size of poor households is around 4.6, larger in rural and poor households (NSO 2011). Those below the poverty line have to allocate a greater proportion of household income to education. Even this would be unlikely to be enough given the high probability that the household had at least one other child in school needing support. If these figures are accurate they suggest that there is a limit to secondary school enrolments in general determined by cost that does not extend much beyond the top quintile of households by income. There is little prospect in the immediate future of this changing, given the economic problems in Malawi.

3.5 Conclusion

Malawi has a historically small and underfunded secondary school system. Population growth and efforts made in the last few decades to expand access to basic education have increased the numbers entering and completing primary school. Completion rates at primary level are still very low, but gross numbers completing are increasing nonetheless. This creates demand for secondary education. Secondary education is currently funded in a way which means that only a very few students receive subsidised government secondary education. The total amount spent on secondary education is too low and the amount spent per student far too high for universal access. The secondary education system is too small for the population of school age and to absorb the number of primary completers. This has created a demand for private schools from households with sufficient income to pay.

However, the costs involved in running a for profit private secondary school, even if it is done with minimum investment in teachers and infrastructure, with many teachers unqualified and very basic classrooms (See case study schools), mean that it is unaffordable to the majority of Malawians. Those below the national poverty line and the \$1.25 poverty line, representing the vast majority of the population, simply cannot afford any kind of secondary education since all secondary schools have costs to households, let alone to attend a for profit private school.

Private schooling is unlikely grow unless either its costs fall which is not the indication at the moment. Private schools can and do capture richer students from poor quality CDSSs. The cheapest private schools in the case studies appear to be running near their margins of viability with most costs in salaries and limited scope to reduce these costs. If the costs of private schools superior to CDSSs continue to rise, it is probable that growth in private schooling will continue to stall and the numbers reach a plateau.

One question of interest to this study then becomes whether new arrangements related to the private sector (such as loan finance from banks) could help them to expand provision, improve quality and also improve equity. The loans would have to be paid off from increased income. The experiences of private schools that we heard about suggest that banks are reluctant to finance private secondary schools in Malawi. A question for further research might be why this is the case.

4. Private Schools in Malawi—an Overview

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we describe the private secondary school sector in Malawi using Government Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Malawi National Exam Board (MANEB) data. These allow us to examine the number of schools, their proportional share of the total number, and how this has changed over time, enrolments and performance. We are also able to disaggregate the data by district and by gender, which reveal very uneven patterns of access across Malawi and between genders.

The discussion also highlights some problems with the data, which are principally, underreporting of EMIS data due to non-cooperation by some private schools in protest at government regulation, apparent problems of school classification, or differences in classification between years, and the inability to disaggregate data between different types of private schools and conventional schools.

The data we describe suggests that private schools educate a large minority of secondary level students—almost a quarter. Private schools overall perform relatively well in national exams, better than the least selective form of government school—CDSS, but not as well as more competitive government schools, the conventional secondary schools. Private schools account for a disproportionate proportion of University of Malawi entrants. One of the most interesting findings is that although secondary education overall is very gender unequal, private schools have very equal gender parity index (GPI) in terms of the exam candidates they enter. This contradicts earlier suggestions that households may decide that sending boys to private schools represents a better investment of household income. Because private secondary schooling in Malawi is accessible only to the very wealthiest households, they may not make these kinds of investment decisions (Chimombo, 1999).

4.2 Schools

Education statistics (EMIS) show that the number of secondary schools in Malawi increased from 62 schools in 1979 to 332 schools in 1993 to 1,158 in 2008 and to 1,041 schools in 2011. The data shows an initial slow growth in the number of secondary schools with marked increases in recent times. Increases are especially marked around the end of the Banda regime, transition to democracy and the advent of universal primary education in 1994. The decrease in the number of private schools since the financial crisis and government inspection in 2009 is also notable.

Analysis of the education system in Malawi is hampered by the lack of accurate data. In any given year, the number of schools responding to the annual census is not complete and the problem is particularly acute at the secondary school level. This is one of the major problems in any attempt to understand the growth of education in Malawi. Figure 5 omits the crucial years between 1994 and 2001 due to incomplete data. The decrease in the number of private secondary schools since 2008 is also, we assume due both to actual school closures and lack of data / responses from schools to EMIS questionnaires.

Table 4 — Schools in Malawi (1979–2011)

Year	Primary Schools			Secondary Schools		
	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total
1979	1,648	—	1,648	50	12	62
1981	1,715	—	1,715	54	12	66
1982	1,744	—	1,744	54	16	70
1983	1,769	—	1,769	54	12	66
1984	2,425	—	2,425	57	16	73
1985	2,495	—	2,495	58	15	73
1986	2,520	—	2,520	60	15	75
1987	2,533	—	2,533	59	16	75
1988	2,660	—	2,660	61	18	79
1989	2,506	—	2,506	64	14	78
1990	2,173	—	2,173	66	14	80
1991	2,346	—	2,346	72	21	93
1992	2,739	—	2,739	274	21	295
1993	3,056	—	3,056	290	42	332
1994	3,216	—	3,216	—	—	—
1995	3,424	—	3,424	76	31	107
1996	3,706	—	3,706	487	137	624
2001	4,802	55	4,857	—	—	—
2002	—	—	—	625	143	781
2003	—	—	—	627	143	785
2004	937	28	965	735	232	967
2005	5,004	155	5,159	719	259	978
2006	5,041	190	5,231	887	318	1,106
2007	5,086	221	5,307	715	334	1,049
2008	5,118	343	5,461	788	372	1,160
2009	5,106	298	5,404	842	285	1,127
2010	5,191	201	5,392	860	185	1,045
2011	5,225	170	5,395	847	194	1,041

Figure 5 — Public and private secondary schools in Malawi 1979–2011

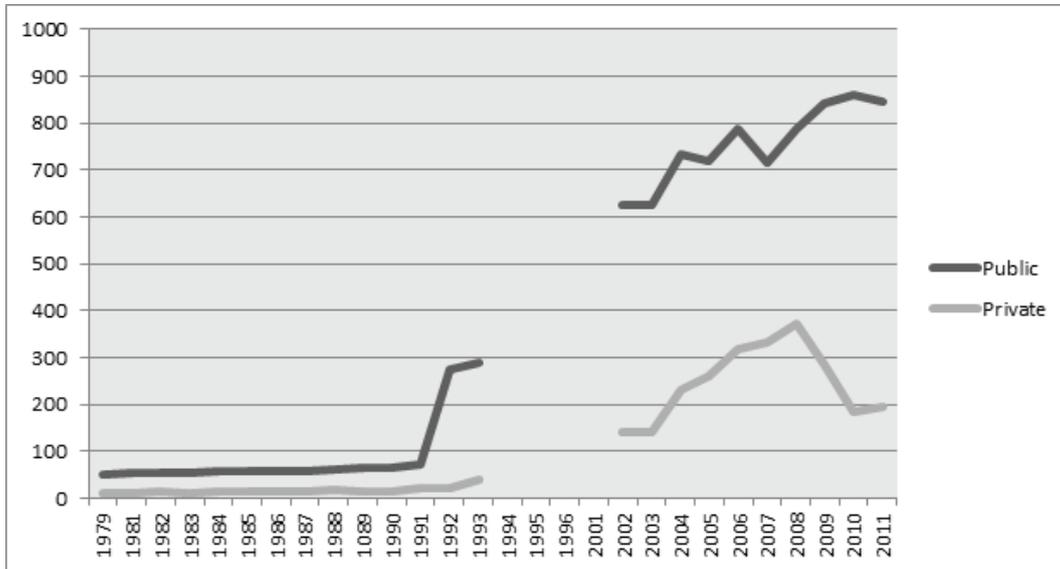
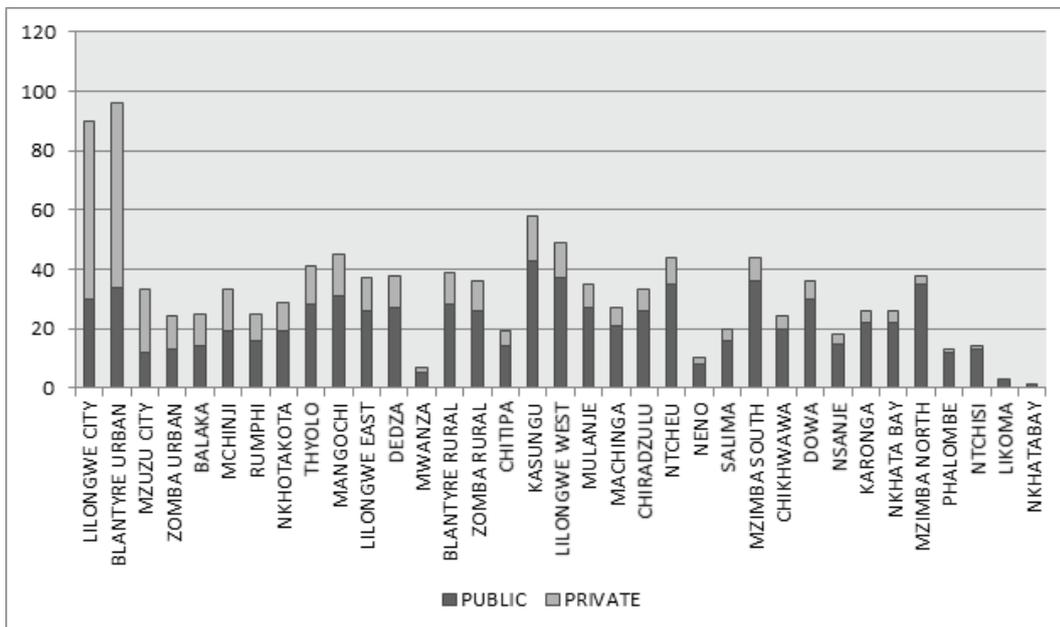


Figure 6 — Secondary schools in Malawi by type and district



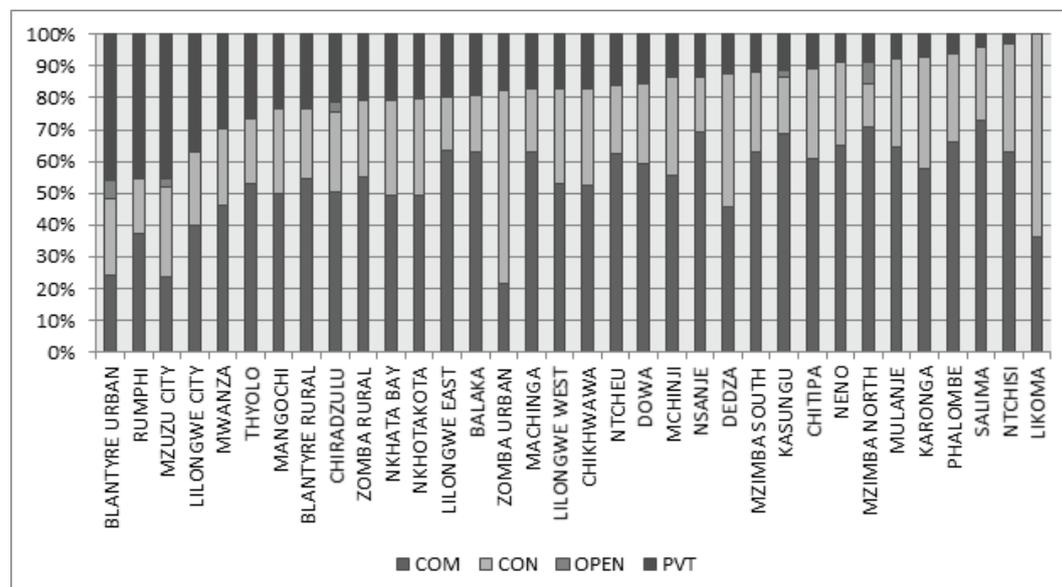
Malawi National Exam board (MANEB) data for 2012 show that the number of public and private schools and the proportion of different types of providers in different districts varies widely in the different districts of Malawi. Figure 6 shows the districts of Malawi organised from left to right in order of the ratio of public and private schools, with Lilongwe City having about half as many public secondary schools as private, and Phalombe having 13 times more public schools than private. Wealthy, urban, fast growing districts seem to have a higher proportion of private secondary schools than poorer, rural districts, from which people are emigrating. The growth of private schools

happens in the districts, which already have the best secondary education provision and enrolment ratios—unsurprisingly the private sector is responding to demand from the wealthy and aspirational, rather than plugging gaps in the system. Where internal migrants and newly wealthy people overwhelm the inadequate public system, private schools respond to demand. In chapter 5 we look at the migration histories of children in for profit private schools.

4.3 Enrolment

Figure 7 below presents the proportion of MSCE candidates from schools of different types in each district of Malawi in 2012. The graph is based on exam board data, which may be more reliable than EMIS data as schools cannot and do not refuse to submit data. The ratio of public school students (from CDSS, conventional and open secondary schools) to private school students sitting the MSCE in a district ranges from almost 1:1 in Blantyre Urban to 33:1 in Nchisi. In most districts around half of the students are from CDSS, apart from Likoma and Zomba Urban, where there is a large proportion of conventional schools, and Blantyre Urban, Rumphhi, Mzuzu City and Lilongwe City, (the major cities of Malawi) where almost half of MSCE candidates were from private schools. The pattern is similar to that observed with the number of schools (although the number of schools is a poor proxy for enrolment, as school size is important). Wealthier, urban and rapidly growing areas have high proportions of private school entrants for exams. They also tend to have higher enrolment rates, although the causality is hard to establish. It is also important to note that in exam board data, grant aided schools are counted as conventional schools.

Figure 7 — 2012 MSCE entrants by school type and district



Source: MANEB 2012 MSCE Entrants

Table 5 presents the enrolment in primary and secondary schools since 1993. It shows the steady increase in enrolments since UPE. Primary enrolments have more than doubled

over the 18-year timeframe, while secondary enrolments have increased by three and a half times.

Table 5 — *Primary and secondary enrolments Malawi 1993–2011*

Year	Primary enrolments	Secondary Enrolments	MCDE	Secondary + MCDE Total	Ratio (primary/secondary enrollments)
1993	1,795,451	36,550	35,779	72,329	25
1994	1,895,423	46,544	42,308	88,852	21
1995	2,860,819	48,360	57,481	105,841	27
1996	2,887,107	57,812	81,574	139,386	21
1997	2,905,950	70,761	108,844	179,605	16
1998	2,805,785	59,836	132,455	192,291	15
1999	2,896,280	75,969	166,781	242,750	12
2000	3,016,972	46,396	118,063	164,459	18
2001	3,187,835	57,635	118,617	176,252	18
2002	3,164,191	45,989	93,767	139,756	23
2003	3,112,513	54,492	76,258	130,750	24
2004	3,166,786	180,157			18
2005	3,200,646	183,854			17
2006	3,280,714	218,310			15
2007	3,306,926	210,325			16
2008	3,600,771	233,578			15
2009	3,671,481	243,838			15
2010	3,868,643	240,918			16
2011	4,034,220	256,343			16

Source: MoE EMIS data—various years. (After 2004, MCDE were counted within the secondary enrolments)

In 2004 MCDE centres were reclassified as CDSS, so secondary enrolments appear to have increased from 54,000 to 180,000 in one year. We have added the MCDE figure in the fourth column to clarify this. The transition rate from primary to secondary does seem to have narrowed with the ratio of primary to secondary school enrolment reducing from 25:1 in 1993 to 16:1 in 2011. The gross enrolment rate (GER) for secondary education has remained very low and was estimated at 34% in 2012. In terms of gender, there have consistently been more boys than girls in secondary schools in Malawi (World Bank, 2013).

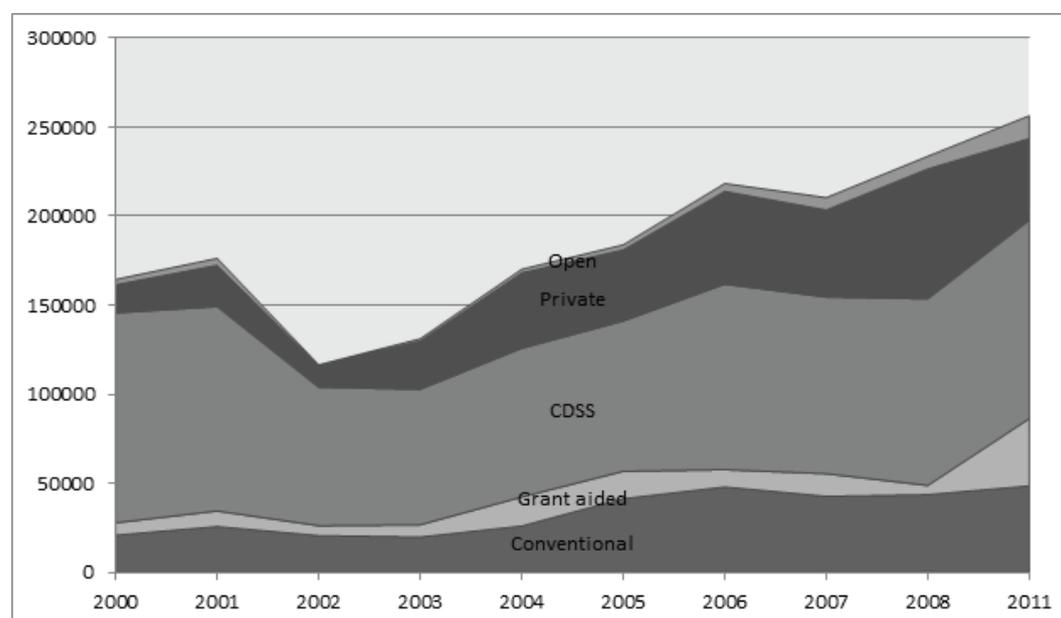
In table 6, the growth of secondary school enrolment has been presented by school type since 2000. The table illustrates some of the weaknesses in EMIS data. There appear to be huge changes between years that cannot possibly have happened. In 2008 enrolments in grant-aided schools dropped sharply, and those in private schools rose sharply—indicating that there may have been some classification errors or changes. This is very clear in Figure 8 below. We must assume that the sudden decrease in grant aided enrolments and corresponding increase in private school enrolments is an error in the data rather than reflecting reality. The 2008 data seems to be problematic.

Table 6 — Secondary enrolments by school type 2000–2011

School type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2011
Government	20,906	25,738	20,684	19,861	26,051	41,412	47,996	42,734	43,700	48,581
%	13%	15%	18%	15%	15%	23%	22%	20%	19%	19%
Grant aided	6,997	8,764	5,615	6,908	16,322	15,382	9,717	12,730	5,175	37,740
%	4%	5%	5%	5%	10%	8%	4%	6%	2%	15%
CDSS	117,783	114,751	77,682	76,084	83,492	84,351	104,161	99,172	104,716	111,371
%	72%	65%	67%	58%	49%	46%	48%	47%	45%	43%
Private	15,796	23,133	12,035	27,016	42,335	39,887	52,003	48,750	72,864	45,772
%	10%	13%	10%	21%	25%	22%	24%	23%	31%	18%
Open	2,977	3,866	477	1,231	1,957	2,822	4,433	6,939	7,118	12,879
%	2%	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%	3%	5%
Total	164,459	176,252	116,493	131,100	170,157	183,854	218,310	210,325	233,573	256,343

Source: MoE EMIS data—various years

Figure 8 — Secondary enrolments by school type 2000–2011



It can be noted from Table 6 and Figure 8 that in the secondary school sub-sector, the share of students is greatest in the CDSS where 43% of learners were enrolled in 2011. However this proportion has been decreasing steadily since 2000, when CDSS enrolled 72% of learners. Government policy has been one of providing only sufficient secondary school places at Form 2 and Form 4 levels to meet the student input level of post-secondary training institutions and the estimated direct manpower needs of the economy (MoE, 1994). But since 1998, in addition to the upgrading of Malawi College

of Distance Education (MCDE)² centres to CDSS there has also been an increase in both the enrolment and proportion share of private secondary schools. In 2000 private schools educated just 10% of all secondary school students in Malawi. In 2008 the proportion of secondary students in private school peaked at 31%, and in 2011 it was 18%, its lowest level since 2002. It is important to remember several caveats to this data. The problems highlighted above of possible classification errors or inconsistencies between years, potential non-cooperation in the EMIS process from private schools in protest about government regulation and the nature of secondary education in Malawi. Overall net enrolment rates at secondary level in Malawi remain below 30%. Those who survive to enter secondary school are already a select minority.

Grant aided schools have also become relatively important, they educated 4% of students in 2000 and in 2011 educated 15%. However, the increase in grant sided school enrolments between 2008-2011 and corresponding decrease in private school enrolments suggests that this may be the result of a reclassification of schools rather than real change. This may be in error, due to inconsistencies between years or a response to the government’s regulation regime. Open schools have increased the proportion that they educate from 2% to 5%. Conventional secondary schools have remained relatively stable in terms of number of schools, educating 13% in 2000 and 19% in 2011. The average school size is therefore likely to have increased.

As observed above, examination entry statistics from the Malawi National Exam Board (MANEB) provide another indication of participation rates in different types of schools. They may be more reliable in terms of estimating numbers and relative share of provision than EMIS data although they come with their own problems. We are unable to distinguish between different types of private schools in the MANEB data so the category of ‘private’ includes all private schools, lumping expensive elite schools together with the least expensive forms of private secondary education. The numbers entered for Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) and for Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) are analysed below.

Table 7 — JCE candidates by school type

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Conventional	22,936	23,296	22,669	23,959	24,471
%	19%	20%	19%	19%	19%
CDSS	74,426	71,436	78,779	84,372	84,365
%	63%	62%	65%	66%	66%
Private	20,892	19,879	19,676	18,686	17,456
%	18%	17%	16%	15%	14%
Open	652	624	726	894	942
%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Total	118,906	115,235	121,850	127,911	127,234

Source: MANEB Exam statistics

2. In 1998, all MCDEs were converted into Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS)

Table 7 shows that the number of students sitting for the JCE is by far the largest in the CDSS by a factor of more than three compared to conventional schools and by a factor close to five compared to private schools. The numbers of candidates in CDSS is increasing while that of conventional schools has remained constant and that of private schools appears to have decreased since 2008. There are an insignificant number of students from open schools at the JCE level, less than 1% of all JCE candidates were from open schools in 2012.

Table 8 — *MSCE candidates by school type*

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
CSS	29,075	31,446	26,785	32,282	34,175
%	26%	26%	27%	27%	26%
CDSS	53,444	54,967	46,661	58,368	63,798
%	47%	46%	48%	48%	49%
Private	29,981	31,137	23,080	28,891	31,066
%	26%	26%	24%	24%	24%
Open	1,255	1,373	1,006	1,265	1,411
%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Total	113,755	118,923	97,532	120,806	130,450

Source: MANEB Exam Statistics

At the MSCE level, the CDSS continue to sit the majority of the students. Private school candidates are roughly equal in number to conventional schools. There are more students from the open schools at the MSCE level compared to the JCE level. It is striking that the proportion of MSCE candidates from different school types appears so stable when enrolments appear to be rather more volatile. Private schools enrolled 31% of secondary school learners in 2008 and submitted 26% of MSCE candidates; in 2011 they enrolled just 18% of secondary school learners, according to EMIS, but submitted 24% of MSCE candidates. This indicates that there may be some error, most probably in the EMIS data. The number of private school candidates is not growing and seems to have peaked and reached a plateau, which is predictable in terms of affordability. There was a slight decrease after 2009, which may reflect the impact of the government closure of some private schools, damage to the reputations of private schools and economic hardship.

In terms of gender there are significant differences between the gender parity indices (GPI) between school types in their MSCE candidates. In all years there were more boys entered than girls. In all school types apart from open secondary schools there were more boys entered than girls, with a slow but steady trend towards parity. Open secondary schools submit only 1% of candidates for MSCE and the GPI also fluctuates more in open schools than others, so caution should be taken before reading too much into the open secondary schools figure. CDSS have the lowest GPI at only 0.62 on average over the years 2008-2012 indicating that they are entering many more boys than girls into the MSCE exams. Conventional secondary schools have an average GPI over the years of 0.80. Private schools are the most gender equal of the major school types, consistently entering almost equal numbers of candidates for the MSCE. This may be because households buying into private education have high levels of income and

parental education so they are less likely to favour boy over girls, or to need to choose one over the other if they can afford to send all their children to secondary school.

Table 9 — *Gender Parity Index of MSCE candidates by school type*

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Average
CSS	0.77	0.79	0.82	0.80	0.81	0.80
CDSS	0.57	0.58	0.60	0.66	0.69	0.62
Private	0.92	0.93	0.98	0.98	1.00	0.96
Open	1.10	0.95	1.31	1.03	0.90	1.06
Average	0.84	0.81	0.93	0.87	0.85	0.86

Source: MANEB Exam Statistics

When we put JCE and MSCE entrants together, but staggering the years to show the same cohort progressing through the two exams we see some interesting patterns (Table 10). In 2010 significantly fewer candidates took the MSCE than the JCE in 2008, perhaps indicating a measure of dropout in the two years. However the pattern was reversed in 2011 and 2012, with more candidates sitting the MSCE than sat the JCE in 2009 and 2010, perhaps indicating that there were candidates resitting, the MSCE.

Disaggregating the data by school type reveals that there are remarkably stable patterns of transition between school types at secondary level, so that conventional schools have 7-8% more candidates at MSCE level than they had at JCE level, CDSS have 14-16% fewer candidates at MSCE level than they had at JCE level and private schools have 6-7% more candidates at MSCE than they have at JCE level. In open schools, there are consistently increases in the number of candidates who sit the MSCE than the JCE. There appears to be a transition of candidates from CDSS to conventional and private schools during secondary school, and candidates joining or re-joining the education system, mainly in conventional, open and private schools at the MSCE level.

Table 10 — *Transition between secondary school types*

	2008 JCE	2010 MSCE	Change	2009 JCE	2011 MSCE	Change	2010 JCE	2012 MSCE	Change
CSS	22,936	26,785	3,849	23,296	32,282	8,986	22,669	34,175	11,506
%	19%	27%	8%	20%	27%	7%	19%	26%	7%
CDSS	74,426	46,661	-27,765	71,436	58,368	-13,068	78,779	63,798	-14,981
%	63%	48%	-15%	62%	48%	-14%	65%	49%	-16%
Private	20,892	23,080	2,188	19,879	28,891	9,012	19,676	31,066	11,390
%	18%	24%	6%	17%	24%	7%	16%	24%	8%
Open	652	1,006	354	624	1,265	641	726	1,411	685
%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Total	118,906	97,532	-21,374	115,235	120,806	5,571	121,850	130,450	8,600

Source: MANEB Exam Statistics

4.4 Performance

Data on subject pass rates across school types has been presented in Table 11. The MSCE is graded from 1 to 9 with 1 to 2 representing distinction, 3 to 6 representing credit, 7 to 8 representing pass and 9 representing a failure. The 2012 student results were recorded along these categories and the results of the recorded data is presented in this table.

Table 11 — MSCE Performance by gender and school type 2012 (percentages)³

Biology	Performance Level	CDSS		CSS		Open		Private	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	Distinction	1.0	0.1	4.9	1.6	3.0	0	4.0	1.1
	Credit	13.3	4.4	31.1	17.1	21.3	8.1	26.3	16.6
	Pass	39.0	30.2	39.8	42.8	36.0	36.2	39.1	41.2
	Fail	46.7	65.2	24.2	38.5	39.7	55.7	30.7	41.2
	Number who Sat	32,490		16,792		536		13,499	
English	Distinction	0.3	0.1	2.3	2.6	0.3	0.2	2.0	1.3
	Credit	21.7	15.9	47.5	41.0	28.9	23.8	41.0	41.5
	Pass	65.3	69.5	44.6	50.5	57.2	62.9	50.2	51.1
	Fail	12.7	14.5	5.6	5.9	13.6	13.2	6.8	6.0
	Number who Sat	56,553		30,537		1,083		27,727	
Maths	Distinction	1.7	0.2	6.3	1.3	2.6	0.2	4.4	1.1
	Credit	16.0	6.3	32.7	19.7	23.2	9.5	28.8	19.2
	Pass	3.4	27.1	29.9	34.7	31.4	30.5	30.1	34.9
	Fail	51.9	66.4	31.1	44.2	42.8	59.8	36.7	44.8
	Number who Sat	55,106		30,400		1,052		27,194	
P/Science	Distinction	0.5	0	1.9	0.4	1.2	0	1.6	0.3
	Credit	12.8	3.4	27.4	12.4	20.4	5.9	24.4	11.8
	Pass	46.3	34.0	48.2	48.7	42.2	39.6	48.6	49.4
	Fail	40.5	62.6	22.4	38.5	36.2	54.5	25.5	38.4
	Number who sat	27,514		24,578		589		19,520	

Source: MANEB Data

3. Grant aided schools are grouped together with conventional schools.

The results in the table show that overall; boys outperform girls in all the subjects and school types. Only in English in conventional secondary schools did a greater proportion of girls get distinctions compared to boys. In the CDSS, more than 60% of the girls failed the science subjects. Across the subjects, students in private schools performed better than students in CDSS. The best performing students were in conventional schools. A Chi-square test indicated that the differences in performance of students were very significant both by school type and sex.

A much larger proportion of candidates passed the English MSCE than the maths MSCE. However a larger proportion of students got distinctions in maths than in English. Significant proportions of candidates got distinctions only in conventional and private schools. Candidates from CDSS and Open Schools were more likely to fail and less likely to get a merit or distinction in maths and English. This is important as these results influence selection to universities in Malawi.

Figure 9 — *English MSCE results by school type*

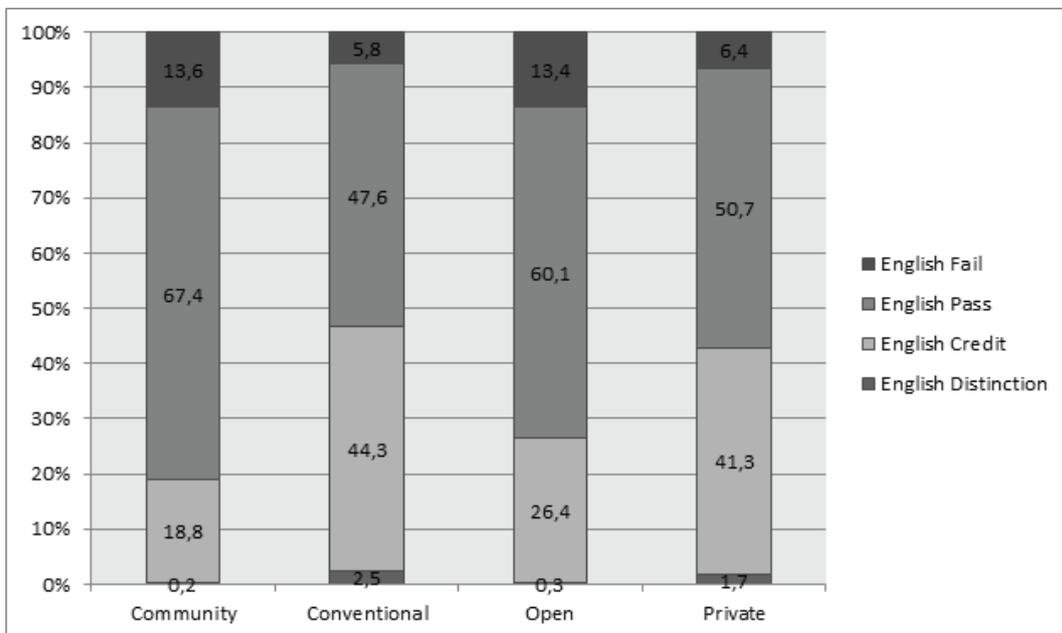


Figure 10 — Maths MSCE results by school type

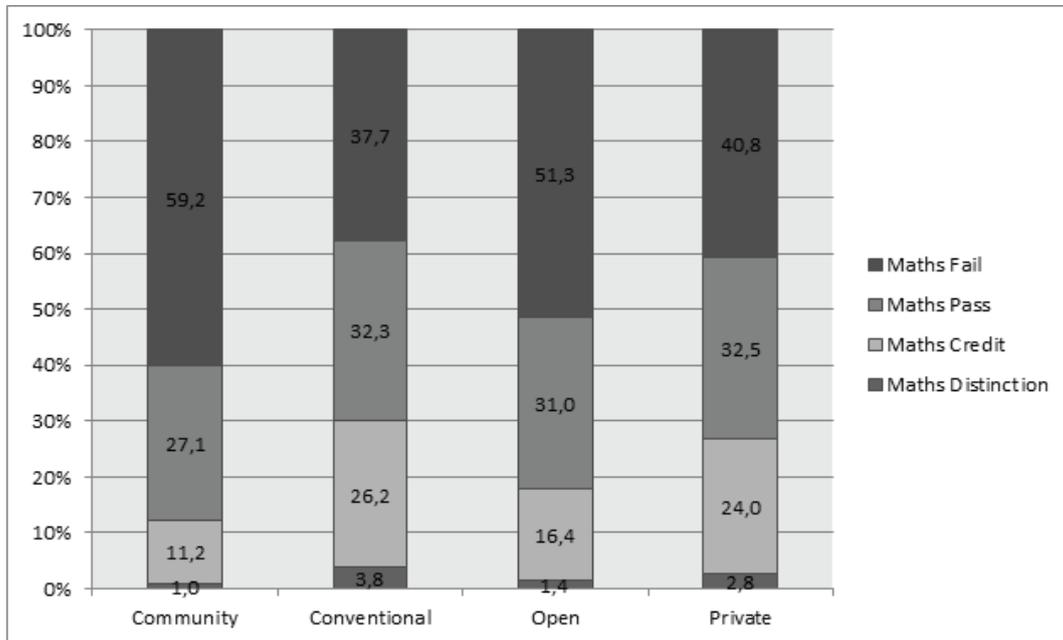
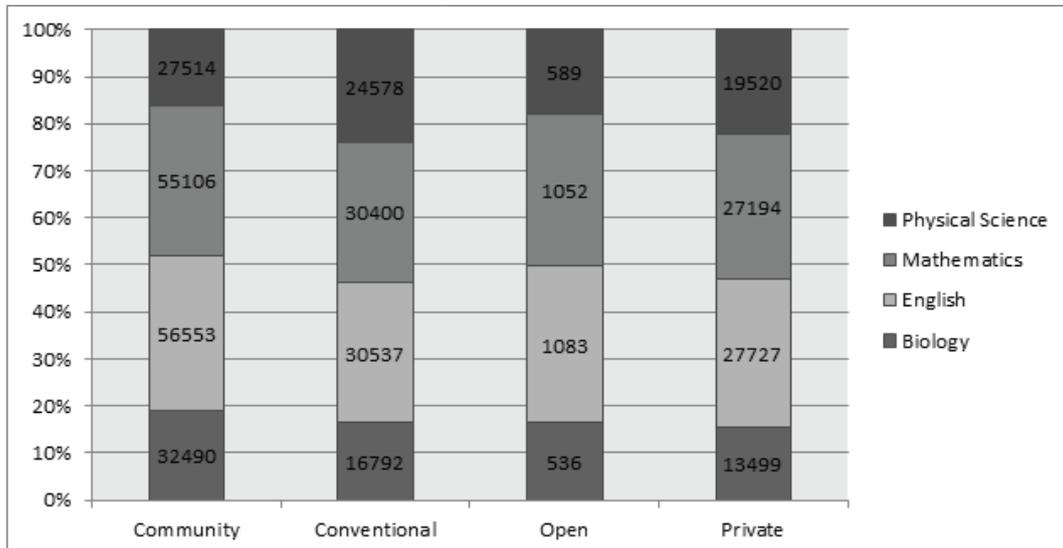


Figure 11 presents the total number of students who registered for the four subjects by school type in 2012.

Figure 11 — MSCE candidates by subject and school type



It can be noted from the graph that in all the school types, students registered for English and mathematics in almost equal proportions. The differences were however between biology and physical science. In the CDSS, more students registered for biology than physical science. This is understandable given the relative ease of conducting Biology lessons compared to physical science. But in conventional and private schools, more students registered for physical science compared to biology.

4.5 University Entrance

This section examines patterns of student entrance into to higher education. This is a key indicator of performance in secondary schools in Malawi as university selection is made on the basis of MSCE performance. The analysis uses entrance data from the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi in 2010. This information has been presented in Table 12 below.

Table 12 — *University of Malawi entrants 2010*

		F	M	Total	GPI
Normal Conventional	Count	176	373	549	0.47
	% of school type	32%	68%	100%	
	% of gender	18%	33%	26%	
National	Count	304	200	504	1.52
	% of school type	60%	40%	100%	
	% of gender	31%	18%	24%	
Private	Count	449	412	861	1.09
	% of school type	52%	48%	100%	
	% of gender	46%	36%	41%	
CDSS/open	Count	45	154	199	0.29
	% of school type	23%	77%	100%	
	% of gender	5%	14%	9%	
Total	Count	974	1139	2113	0.86
	% of school type	46%	54%	100%	
	% of gender	100%	100%	100%	

A total of 2,113 students entered the University of Malawi in 2010. The majority of the students—about 60%—were from public schools of different types. National schools and conventional government schools provided about 50% of all entrants, CDSS provided slightly less than 10%. A minority (41%) were from private schools of different kinds, the majority of which were high price. In terms of gender, more boys (54%) than girls (46%) entered the University of Malawi, with a GPI of 0.86 among entrants. There is an interesting distinction between the national conventional secondary schools, which are mainly boarding schools, and the normal conventional schools. National schools enter more girls than boys to the university (GPI 1.52) and make up 60% of all female entrants but only 23% of all entrants. Private schools also entered more girls than boys (GPI 1.09). Normal conventional schools (GPI 0.47), CDSS and open schools (GPI 0.29) have many more male entrants than female.

In 2010, candidates from conventional secondary schools made up 27% of all MSCE candidates, but 50% of the University of Malawi entrants. These candidates had twice the average rate of being selected for the University of Malawi, with 4% being selected,

versus 2% of all candidates. Private schools accounted for 24% of all MSCE candidates, but 41% of the University of Malawi entrants, again having a 4% rate of selection. MSCE candidates from CDSS and Open Schools made up 48% of all MSCE candidates, but just 9% of University of Malawi entrants, only 0.3% of MSCE candidates from CDSS and Open schools were selected.

Table 13 — *MSCE candidates and University of Malawi entrants 2010*

	MSCE Candidates (2010)	University of Malawi Entrants (2010)	Percentage of candidates selected
CSS (Normal+ National)	26,785	1,053	4%
%	27%	50%	
CDSS and Open	46,661	199	0%
%	48%	9%	
Private	23,080	861	4%
%	24%	41%	
Total	97,532	2,113	2%

It is clear from the data that a few of the best schools among the private and conventional schools are dominating entrance to the University of Malawi. Candidates from CDSS and open schools have very little chance of performing well in exams and being selected to the University of Malawi, although they account for the largest share of candidates in the MSCE.

4.6 Conclusion

Private schools educate a large minority of secondary level students in Malawi—almost a quarter in most recent years. Private schools overall perform relatively well in national exams, better than the least competitive form of government school—CDSS, but not as well as more competitive government schools, the conventional secondary schools. Students in the best performing types of schools, conventional and private schools also sat for ‘harder’ more prestigious subjects, such as physical science.

A small number of the highest performing private schools and conventional secondary schools account for a disproportionate proportion of University of Malawi entrants. Students in CDSS have a very small chance of going to the heavily subsidised national university, in 2010, only 0.3% of candidates for the MSCE exam from CDSS got into the university, while 4% from private schools and conventional schools were selected. One of the most interesting findings is that although secondary education overall is very gender unequal, private schools have very equal GPI terms of the exam candidates they enter. This corresponds with the findings from the case studies that suggest that entry into private schools is determined only by ability to pay, rather than other considerations, which we discuss in the next chapter.

5. A Synthesis of School Case Studies

5.1 Introduction

Case studies of 15 schools were used in this study to illustrate aspects of the private secondary education sector in Malawi. These were developed to complement analyses of secondary data sources. Data from the case studies was used to assist in the development of a more detailed analysis of the functioning of private secondary schools and to make comparisons of the strengths and weakness of private provision of secondary education. This chapter is a synthesis of the findings from the case studies. As indicated in Chapter 1, the case study schools were in four Education Districts namely: Zomba, Blantyre Urban, Blantyre Rural and Dedza. A discussion of the methodology followed in compiling these case studies is in Chapter 1. For confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms for participating schools have been used throughout this report. Table 14 outlines the sampled private secondary schools by district.

Table 14 — *Case study Schools*

Education District	Schools
Zomba	Grave Private Secondary School
	Location Private Secondary School
	Mzungu Private Secondary School
Blantyre Urban	Dwelling Private Secondary School
	Crack Private Secondary School
	Jungle Private Secondary School
	Rocky Private Secondary School
	Ideal Private Secondary School
	Effort Private Secondary School
Blantyre Rural	Airport Private Secondary School
	Tarmac Private Secondary School
Dedza	Hilly Private Secondary School
	Dambo Private Secondary School
	Trading Private Secondary School
	Foreign Private Secondary School

Similarly codes, for the respondents have been used in this report as follows:

MT = Male Teacher

FT = Female Teacher

HT = Head teacher

ML4 = Form 4 male learner

- ML1 = Form 1 male learner
- FL4 = Form 4 female learner
- FL1 = Form 1 female learner

The case studies helped to identify differences and similarities between the case study schools, which were all in the for profit private secondary schools category. They were selected to represent the cheapest form of private secondary provision. They helped to illustrate some of the trends identified at national level in secondary data, flesh out some of the policy discussion and provide a level of detail that was missing from secondary data analysis.

We discuss the ownership and management of the schools, the learners, the learning and welfare of learners, the teachers, curriculum and finances of the schools. Our analysis of the case study schools indicated that management practices were very informal and depended heavily on the capacity, interest and honesty of the owner with few checks and balances in place to mitigate against malpractice. Our analysis of learners in these for profit private schools indicates that they are from among the top quintile by wealth of Malawian children. They mainly enrolled learners who had studied in public primary schools, but not achieved results that would allow them entry into selective high performing public secondary schools. Guardians of learners in such schools may also not have the money to afford good quality and high performing private secondary schools for their wards.

Teachers in the schools were mixed, they were mainly men, but included many unqualified teachers, some teachers were without post-secondary education and in some schools there were many part time teachers who were teaching simultaneously in government schools where they had a full time job, and in private schools during spare time. Pay and conditions of service of the teachers in these schools were poor, and significantly worse than in the government sector. Levels of teacher turnover were very high as teachers moved between schools in search of better pay and work conditions. Finances in the school were managed in opaque ways but our exploratory analysis indicates that some of these schools were generating significant profits.

5.2 The Case Study Schools

The general characteristics of the case study schools are outlined in Tables 16, 17 and 18 below. The tables compare characteristics of the schools, their status and management, performance, size, teachers, learners and infrastructure. We have included the tuition fee per term and the boarding fee per term (where schools had boarding facilities). The average teacher's salary uses the monthly teacher's salary reported by the head teacher as being the average. Using the basic information provided by the head teacher of the schools and observations we computed the pupil teacher ratio (PTR) and the average class size. The average class size was a more useful figure than PTR as in these secondary schools different teachers teach specialist subjects. The important question for analysis was how many learners were in a classroom with one teacher at any one time. However the PTR may be useful for calculating profitability. We have also included the number of qualified teachers and male teachers.

We have specified whether the school had a water source, and of which sort. Where schools had a water source this was either piped, from a borehole or from a well. Piped water brings the water to the school from a municipal source into taps. A borehole is a carefully constructed water source, built with concrete and burnt bricks. It has some form of machinery that pumps water from the ground after force has been applied to it through a pipe that extends to the surface. Its water is usually clean and safe. A well is an open water source, which is often manually dug in the ground. Its water is usually not safe for drinking.

Finally we have included data on school infrastructure. This was drawn upon structured as well as incidental observations of the schools' buildings and infrastructure during the visits. We have included the numbers of boys and girls toilets, whether the school had a head teacher's office, staffroom, storeroom, computers, laboratory, library or electricity, and a subjective rating of building quality, focusing mainly on the classrooms. A school with 'Good' building quality was one where the walls, floor and roof were all permanent and in good condition, painted and not showing signs of decay and lack of maintenance such as cracks, graffiti and wear. The school was safe and comfortable for learners and teachers.

A school with average building quality was one where the walls, floor and roof were all permanent, but where there was evidence that they had not been maintained properly or were showing signs of decay and damage. The school was safe and comfortable for learners and teachers, but may not look and feel cared for. A school with poor building quality was one where the walls, floor and roof were of temporary construction and/or permanent construction that had not been finished properly, was under construction, had not been painted or had fallen into disrepair having not been maintained well, The school was not safe and comfortable for learners and teachers, and classrooms were often dark, unsuitable for learning and dirty. A school with very poor building quality was one where one or more of the walls, floor and roof were of temporary construction, where the classrooms were not fit for purpose. They may have been dirty, under construction, with holes or leaks in the roof, cracks in the walls, obvious and serious signs of decay and a total lack of maintenance. The classrooms were unhygienic, dangerous and uncomfortable. These schools were not suitable places for children to learn.

Table 15 — *Characteristics of case study schools*

	Name of school				
	Grave	Location	Mzungu	Dwelling	Crack
School Type	Purpose built	Purpose built	Purpose built	Dwelling/ purpose built	Purpose built
Ownership	Family owned	Family owned	Collection of business people	Family owned	Family owned
Day/Boarding	Day	Day	Day	Day	Day
Foundation Year	2003	2009	2009	1999	2012
Location	Zomba	Zomba	Zomba	Blantyre City	Blantyre city
Governing Body	No	No	No	No	No
Exam Centre	No	No	Yes	No	No

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	Name of school				
	Grave	Location	Mzungu	Dwelling	Crack
ISAMA Member	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Tuition Fee per term	7,000	6,000	14,000	5,500	30,000
Boarding fee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Av. Teachers Salary	18,500	16,000	35,000	14,500	35,000
Forms	1-4	1-4	1-4	1-4	1-4
Streams	1	1	1	1	1
No. of Teachers	8	7	16	6	9
No. of Qualified Teachers	2	2	16	0	5
No. of Male Teachers	8	6	12	6	8
Teacher Turnover	13%	29%	6%	67%	67%
No. of Part-time teachers	0	0	12	0	3
Number of learners 2012/13	180	158	149	349	66
% Male learners	49%	46%	69%	48%	55%
Average Class size	45	40	37	87	17
PTR	23:1	23:1	9:1	58:1	7:1
Performance (MSCE pass rate 2011/12)	31%	71%	69%	48%	42%
Selected to UNIMA	0	0	0	0	0
% with own desk	61%	21%	94%	6%	89%
% with no desk	30%	39%	4%	31%	11%
Head teacher's office	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staffroom	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Storeroom	No	Yes	No	No	No
Computers	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Laboratory	No	No	No	No	yes
Library	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Electricity	No	No	No	No	Yes
Number of Boys' toilets	2	4	3	3	8
Number of Girls' toilets	2	4	3	3	8
Water source	Yes (piped)	Yes (piped)	Yes (piped)	No	Yes (piped)
Building Quality	Poor	Poor	Good	Poor	Good

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Table 16 — *Characteristics of case study schools (continued)*

	Name of school				
	Jungle	Rocky	Airport	Tarmac	Ideal
School Type	Purpose built	Purpose built	Purpose built	Purpose built	Purpose built
Ownership	Family owned	Family owned	Family owned	Family owned	Family owned
Day/Boarding	day	Day	Day	Day	Day
Foundation Year	1999	2001	2004	2	2002
Location	Blantyre city	Blantyre City	Blantyre rural	Blantyre rural	Blantyre City
Governing Body	No	No	No	No	No
Exam Centre	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
ISAMA Member	No	Yes	No	No	No
Tuition Fee per term	7,000	9,000	4,500	5,000	17,500
Boarding fee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Av. Teachers Salary	27,000	2,000	20,000	10,000	55,000
Forms	1-4	1-4	1-4	1-4	1-4
Streams	1	1	1	1	1 except 3&4 (3=2; 4=3)
No. of Teachers	9	10	8	5	14
No. of Qualified Teachers	4	0	2	1	13
No. of Male Teachers	8	9	8	5	10
Teacher Turnover	33%	2%	25%	20%	7%
No. of Part-time teachers	0	0	2	2	0
Number of learners 2012/13	316	207	255	27	483
% Male learners	51%	52%	54.5%	37%	47%
Average Class size	79	52	64	7	69
PTR	35:1	21:1	32:1	5:1	35:1
Performance (MSCE pass rate 2011/12)	57%	64%	70.9%	N/A	76%
Selected to UNIMA	0	0	0	N/A	5
% with own desk	47%	65%	18%	0%	23%
% with no desk	15%	28%	58%	0%	69%
Head teacher's office	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Staffroom	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Storeroom	Yes	No	No	No	No
Computers	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

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	Name of school				
	Jungle	Rocky	Airport	Tarmac	Ideal
Laboratory	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Library	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Electricity	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Number of Boys' toilets	8	3	8	2	8
Number of Girls' toilets	6	3	0	2	6
Water source	Yes (piped)	Yes (borehole)	Yes (borehole)	No	Yes (piped)
Building Quality	Good	Very poor	Average	Very poor	Good

Table 17 — *Characteristics of case study schools (continued)*

	Name of school				
	Effort	Hilly	Trading	Dambo	Foreign
School Type	Purpose built	Purpose built	Purpose built	Commercial	Purpose built
Ownership	Family owned	Family owned	Family owned	Trust	Family owned
Day/Boarding	Day	Boarding/Day	Boarding/Day	Boarding/Day	Day
Foundation Year	1997	2004	2006	2	2012
Location	Blantyre City	Dedza	Dedza	Dedza	Dedza
Governing Body	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Exam Centre	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
ISAMA Member	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Tuition Fee per term	10,500	8,000	10,000	7,500	14,000
Boarding fee	N/A	32,000	30,000	N/A	N/A
Av. Teachers Salary	40,000	35,000	40,000	14,000	25,000
Forms Available	1-4	1-4	1-4	1-4	1-4
Streams	1	1	1	1	1
Number of Teachers	15	8	9	9	9
No. of Qualified Teachers	6	3	2	6	9
No. of Male Teachers	14	8	8	9	8
Teacher Turnover	0%	0%	67%	18%	0%
No. of Part-time teachers	0	2	1	2	6
Number of learners 2012/13	302	65	140	133	32
% Male learners	43%	57%	51%	52%	38%

	Name of school				
	Effort	Hilly	Trading	Dambo	Foreign
Average Class size	76	16	35	33	8
PTR	20:1	8:1	16:1	15:1	4:1
Performance (MSCE pass rate)	76%	64%	78.6%	43%	NA
Selected to UNIMA	5	0	0	0	NA
% with own desk	18%	50%	16%	24%	94%
% with no desk	33%	34%	57%	0%	0%
Head teacher's office	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staffroom	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Storeroom	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Computers	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Laboratory	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Library	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Electricity	No	No	Yes	No	No
Number of Boys' toilets	4	2	6	2	3
Number of Girls' toilets	4	1	4	2	4
Water source	No	No	Yes (well)	Yes (piped)	Yes (piped)
Building Quality	Poor	Average	Good	Average	Good

From Tables 16, 17 and 18 a number of characteristics become clear. This section highlights these characteristics of the case study schools under the following six major thematic areas: ownership and management; learners; teachers; infrastructure; curriculum and financial issues.

5.3 Ownership and Management

All but two case study schools were family owned. Dambo private secondary school was run as a trust while Mzungu private secondary school was managed by a group of businessmen. The individual owners act as sole proprietors with little accountability and they consider themselves to be the governing bodies though they have no independent representation. Nine of the 15 schools were registered with the Independent Schools Association of Malawi (ISAMA). Those that were not registered with ISAMA gave different reasons for not doing so. Some said they were still contemplating registering while others seemed not to be sure of the benefits of being a member of ISAMA. Those that were loyal to the Private Schools Association of Malawi (PRISAM) felt there were issues that needed to be ironed out first between ISAMA and PRISAM before they could think of joining ISAMA.

Tuition fees varied over a wide range from MK4,500 (\$11.25) to MK30,000 (\$75) per learner per term for day secondary schools. For those schools such as Hilly and Trading Secondary Schools that had boarding facilities, the boarding fee was MK32,000 (\$80) and MK30,000 (\$75) respectively.

The case study schools varied in size from very small with 27 learners to over 483. The schools with very few learners were very recently established schools as such they had not yet built up pupil numbers. Nevertheless they had hope of increases in enrolment in the near future. Average class sizes ranged from 7 to 87, and pupil teacher ratios from 4:1 to 58:1. All the sampled schools teach Forms 1-4. All but one case study schools had one stream in each of the forms, meaning that each form had only one class. Due to high enrolment at Ideal Private Secondary School, the school had 2 streams in Form 3 and 3 streams in form 4. These patterns shift from year to year as enrolments fluctuate.

The availability of learning materials, buildings and other facilities varied from completely inadequate to good in ways associated with fee levels. These for profit private secondary schools appeared to be poorly resourced in terms of teaching and learning materials such as textbooks and science equipment. The quality of the buildings was also a problem in most of the schools especially the toilets. Ventilation and lighting was poor in some of the classrooms.

Data management by schools was inconsistent. In some schools the head teacher was able to find and interpret enrolment, migration and dropout data easily, while in others such data was not available, not recorded or schools were not willing to release it. While all the schools had data on enrolments in the current academic year, only five of the fifteen schools had data on enrolments for the last five years. Only six of the fifteen schools had (or were prepared to share) data on dropout for the last two years and only five had (or were prepared to share) data on learner migration into and out of the school in the last complete academic year.

5.4 Learners

The catchment area in these for profit day private secondary schools was mostly local as learners came from areas close to the school. Most of the learners walked to the schools, others rode bicycles and a few others travelled on paid minibuses, especially in towns. These learners were either not selected for government secondary schools, or were poached from near-by Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs) and other for profit private schools. Learners from Community Day Secondary Schools who joined private secondary schools claimed that there was a better teaching and learning environment in private schools when compared to CDSSs. In one of the focus group discussions with the learners it was commented that

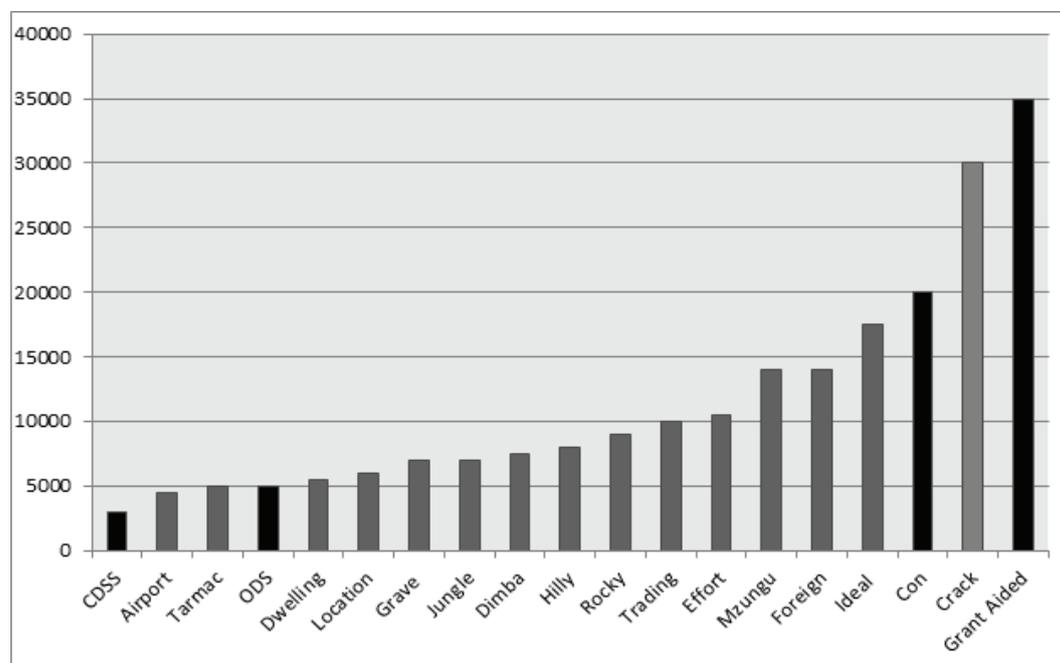
Teachers in CDSSs are lazy. They may be qualified but they are not hard working. More often they do not report for classes. Learners end up learning very few subjects in a day due to teacher absenteeism. In private secondary schools, teachers are hard-working because the director monitors them and ensures that they teach. They know that if they misbehave, they can be dismissed anytime. So in this respect, learners would rather go to a private secondary school than to a CDSS. Those who are in CDSSs, have no option, they cannot afford the fees in private secondary schools (ML4, Dambo private secondary school).

A head teacher at one of the schools visited alluded to the same in one of the interviews and said that:

Learners for this school come straight from the primary schools when they are not selected to go to government secondary schools. Nevertheless we also have learners who shun the Community Day Secondary Schools. They claim that private secondary schools teach much better than Community Day Secondary Schools (HT, Effort Secondary School).

This may or may not have been true. These interviewees, who have already chosen in favour of private schools are of course likely to affirm the choice. However, it illustrates some of the discourses that surround the emergence of private secondary schools and school choice. From what has been discussed about learners in for profit private secondary schools, it is clear that many of the learners enrol in such schools because that was their only chance of accessing secondary education as access into government secondary schools is limited to a relatively small number of learners who get good passes in national examinations. Some learners that were selected to government CDSSs do abandon them for private schools; but they only do so after being dissatisfied with the teaching and learning environment in the CDSSs. Similarly learners move from one for profit private school to another in search of better academic results. The lowest cost private secondary schools compete directly for learners with nearby CDSSs and other for profit private secondary schools as they are within the same tuition fee band (Figure 12).

Figure 12 — Fees in case study schools alongside government school fees



Access to secondary school is rationed by price and academic performance. Where there is a choice of school between several competing schools, choice depends on academic standing and examination results, price, location, and general reputation.

Enrolments in for profit private schools are volatile and change from year to year with a large turnover of learners who arrived and left within the year (Table 18 and 19). This means that the majority of those enrolled in a particular grade may not have been in the school the previous year. Across the case study schools, the trend in overall average enrolment was down from a peak in 2009. Where there is choice, in and around urban areas, parents and learners seem to shop around for the best arrangements as some schools become popular and others fail. In urban areas there may be a choice of schools within easy travelling distance. In most cases however, the available, affordable options to parents are very limited. Travel beyond a short distance to and from school is difficult, time consuming and costly.

Table 18 — *Enrolments in case study schools by year*

	2008	2009	2010–11	2011–12	2013–13
Dwelling	239	305	247	228	349
Jungle					316
Airport	154	199	219	235	255
Trading					140
Tarmac					27
Hilly					65
Grave			101	170	180
Foreign					32
Effort	403	394	369	348	302
Crack				50	66
Rocky	210	319	355	280	207
Ideal					483
Dambo	102	130	152	130	133
Mzungu		71	135	164	149
Location			197	160	158
Average	222	236	222	196	191

We asked schools for data on dropout and students migration (that is transfers from one school to another). Only six of the 15 case study schools had available data on these issues for the previous complete academic year. These show very high rates of students dropping out and leaving or joining the school to/from other schools. The level of fluctuation of learners is extreme. We calculate rates of dropout and migration by dividing the number of in and out migrants and dropouts by the total enrolments for the school in the year. In some schools one fifth of learners drop out every year, while a fifth join from other schools, average in migration in five of the case study schools in 2011/12 was 15%. Average dropout in six of the case study schools was 21% in 2011/12. We present the results in Table 19.

Table 19 — *Dropout and migration in case study schools*

	In migration 2011/12	Out migration 2011/12	Dropout 2010/11	Dropout 2011/12
Grave	9%	14%	23%	45%
Effort	11%	8%	9%	12%
Rocky	7%	8%	7%	10%
Dambo	22%	21%	20%	35%
Mzungu	25%	9%	11%	13%
Location			15%	12%
Average	15%	12%	14%	21%

Learners in the focus group discussions at Rocky Secondary School discussed how they shopped around and evaluated other schools.

Jungle secondary school is a much better school. It has a good teaching and learning environment, but it is a bit far from our location. Our parents cannot afford the travel expenses; hence, I for one had no choice but to register with this school (FL1, Rocky Secondary school)

Most private secondary schools appear to have no admission requirements except the ability to pay admission and tuition fees. Academic performance, gender or age do not seem to be selection criteria for private schools. Directors and head teachers were open about selection purely on the ability to pay. One of them hinted that

We are in business; as such we welcome anybody who is interested to learn at our school. We do not consider age, gender or even performance. What we ensure during admission of the learners is that they fill a registration form and sign the form as evidence that they will abide by the rules and regulations of the school (Director, Airport Private Secondary School)

Table 20 — *GPI for case study school enrolments*

	2008	2009	2010–11	2011–12	2013–13	5 year average
Dwelling	1.19	1.03	1.17	1.17	1.10	1.13
Jungle					0.85	0.85
Airport	1.41	1.29	1.31	1.70	0.83	1.31
Trading					0.94	0.94
Tarmac					1.70	1.70
Hilly					0.76	0.76
Grave			0.88	0.93	1.05	0.95
Foreign					1.67	1.67
Effort	1.05	1.07	1.11	1.12	1.00	1.07
Crack				0.61	0.83	0.72
Rocky	1.13	0.75	0.78	0.92	0.92	0.90
Ideal					1.14	1.14
Dambo	0.76	0.81	0.67	0.78	0.93	0.79
Mzungu		0.97	1.29	1.16	1.16	1.14
Location			0.71	0.70	1.19	0.87
Average	1.11	0.99	0.99	1.01	1.07	1.03

Gender parity indices in case study schools illustrated that some schools had greater numbers of boys and others greater numbers of girls (Table 20). The average of all schools in most years was very close to parity, as the MSCE entrant figures for private schools indicate is the case for the sector as a whole. The fluctuations in GPI between years in schools are a further indication of the volatility of the student population. It was also noted at some of the schools visited that married people were enrolled. Some of the learners were over 25 years old and one was as old as 34 years.

5.4.1 Schooling History

Table 21 shows the types of schools that the learners who took part in the survey attended in each grade of primary school. This helps us to understand the transitions that are taking place in the schooling histories of children in for profit private schools and therefore to understand some of the choices that parents and children have to make.

Table 21 — *Type of primary school attended by learners*

Grade	Private		Government		Grant aided		Mixed	
	Form 1	Form 4	Form 1	Form 4	Form 1	Form 4	Form 1	Form 4
Std 1	21.4%	17.4%	74.7%	79.6%	0.8%	2.6%	3.1%	0.4%
Std 2	20.1%	16.0%	75.2%	80.8%	0.8%	2.6%	3.9%	0.6%
Std 3	19.9%	16.8%	77.0%	79.8%	0.8%	2.2%	2.3%	1.2%
Std 4	15.4%	17.3%	82.0%	79.6%	1.2%	2.0%	1.4%	1.2%
Std 5	13.2%	16.7%	84.5%	80.2%	1.4%	2.8%	0.8%	0.4%
Std 6	11.1%	16.2%	86.4%	79.8%	1.4%	2.8%	1.0%	1.2%
Std 7	12.3%	14.6%	85.4%	81.6%	1.4%	3.4%	0.8%	0.4%
Std 8	13.2%	13.2%	84.5%	82.6%	1.4%	3.6%	0.8%	0.4%

The learners in these for profit private secondary schools overwhelmingly (81%) attended government primary schools. Many of them attended private schools only at secondary level, perhaps after not achieving the necessary performance to be selected for government secondary schools. There was a small level of attendance in all grades of more than one school in a year (mixed) and of grant-aided or mission schools. This clearly shows that access into government secondary schools is limited to few learners thereby creating demand for private secondary schools.

5.4.2 Education Status of the Parents of Learners

Table 22 shows the levels of education of the parents of learners in the sample of for profit private schools. It compares them to the national figures and figures for Blantyre from the 2010 DHS. Blantyre was chosen for this comparison, as many of the schools were in Blantyre, it is the largest city, the wealthiest area and the district with the highest net enrolment ratio at secondary level. The comparison is not entirely perfect, as the categories in the learner’s survey and in the DHS do not map entirely. The DHS has categories for ‘completed primary’ rather than ‘Has PLSCE’, ‘some secondary’ rather

than ‘Has JCE’, ‘completed secondary’ rather than ‘Has MSCE’. In addition the DHS categories are for all men and women nationally rather than the parents of learners of secondary school age. However the categories are roughly equivalent and allow a comparison, which gives a further indication of the socio-economic position of the learners in these for profit private schools.

Table 22 — *Education status of parents*

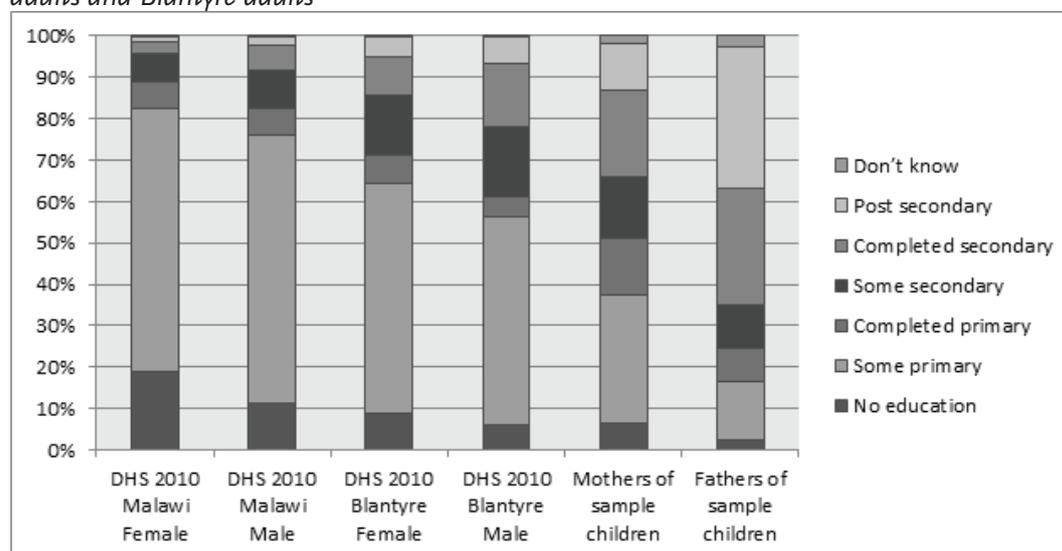
	Schooling status of Mother		DHS 2010 Malawi Female	DHS 2010 Blantyre Female	Schooling status of Father		DHS 2010 Male	DHS 2010 Blantyre Male
	N	%	%	%	N	%	%	%
Did not attend school	64	6%	19%	9%	25	3%	11%	6%
Did not complete primary	310	31%	64%	55%	141	14%	65%	50%
Has PSLCE	136	14%	7%	7%	79	8%	7%	5%
Has JCE	150	15%	7%	14%	105	11%	9%	17%
Has MSCE	205	21%	3%	9%	282	28%	6%	15%
Has post-secondary education	114	11%	1%	5%	341	34%	2%	7%
Don't know	19	2%	0%	0%	25	3%	0%	0%
Total	998	100%	100%	100%	998	100%	100%	100%

Table 22 illustrates that learners in the case study schools come from better-educated families than most Malawians. This is a strong indication that they are from more wealthy backgrounds and that they are more likely to succeed in education regardless of which school type they attend as parental education is such a strong indicator of educational attainment.

Figures 15 and 16 illustrate this further. In Figure 13, the different samples are arranged in order of rates of post-secondary education running from lowest on the left (Malawian females) and the highest on the right (fathers of learners in case study schools). This shows the very high levels of post-secondary education among fathers and mothers of the sampled learners. It also shows the huge rates of primary dropout in the country affecting all groups, but especially the national figure with more than 60% of men and women having attended but failed to complete primary education. Clearly the parents of learners in for profit private schools come from among the best-educated and most privileged sections of society.

34% of fathers of the learners in the sample had some post-secondary education, compared to just 2% of men nationally. 65% of all Malawian men from the 2010 DHS sample had some primary education, compared to just 15% of the sample learner’s fathers. If we take Blantyre, as the district with the highest levels of secondary education in the country, to compare to the sample learners rather than the whole country, we still see the same pattern. The learners in these for profit private schools come from relatively well educated families with very high levels of parents having secondary or post-secondary education compared to the national averages and the average in the wealthiest urban area with the best secondary education rates.

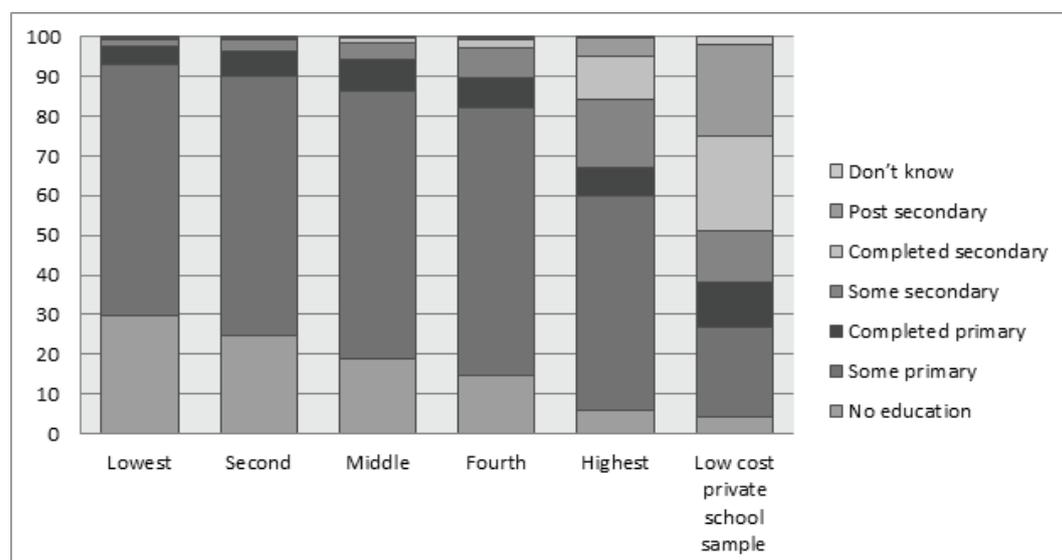
Figure 13 — *Level of education of parents in for profit private schools, among Malawian adults and Blantyre adults*



Source: DHS 2010 and private school children survey

When we compare the levels of education of the parents of the learners in the for profit private school sample with the levels of education nationally by wealth quintile we can see that they are from a better educated group even than the top quintile by wealth from the DHS 2010 sample (Figure 14). We can conclude from this and the analysis of the possession of durable household goods that this sample of for profit private school learners is drawn from among the top quintile by wealth in Malawi. We can also see that secondary education in any type of school is really only common on any scale among the top two quintiles by wealth in the country. Around 10% of the second richest quintile have attended any secondary education at all, and just over 30% of the top quintile have attended any secondary (Figure 14).

Figure 14 — *Level of education of parents in for profit private schools, among Malawian adults by wealth quintile*



Source: DHS 2010 and private school children survey

5.4.3 Household Assets Possessed by Learners' Households

Table 23 and Figure 15 show the household durable goods that learners in the sample of for profit private schools have in the households they come from. In addition to the data about the education of parents above, this helps us to place the learners into the socio-economic context of Malawi using the 2010 nationally representative DHS survey, which measures the possession of these household durable goods at household and individual level across Malawi. We asked learners to report not on their own possession of these items but of their possession in their household. We then compared these to the possession of the items in households at national level.

Table 23 — Household durable goods

Household item	Availability of the household items in sample learners' households		Malawi DHS 2010
	N	%	%
Radio	869	88.0%	53.2%
Television	643	65.5%	10.8%
Mobile telephone	846	85.6%	39.0%
Non-mobile telephone	216	22.7%	2.0%
Refrigerator	426	44.1%	3.7%
Bicycle	541	55.8%	43.8%
Ox cart	57	6.1%	2.1%
Motorcycle/scooter	99	10.5%	1.2%
Car/truck	234	24.5%	1.7%

Much higher proportions of households in this sample possessed these items in their households than the national average. This shows that they came from affluent backgrounds and places many of them among the richest families in Malawi. For example, while 4% of Malawian households had a refrigerator in 2010, 42% of the learners in these for profit private schools lived in households with a refrigerator. Two per cent of Malawian households had a car or truck in 2010, in this sample, 24% lived in households with a car or truck. What this indicates is that even in these for profit private schools, the learners were drawn overwhelmingly from households who are among the top quintile by wealth in Malawi. Figure 15 illustrates this.

Figure 15 — Household durable goods

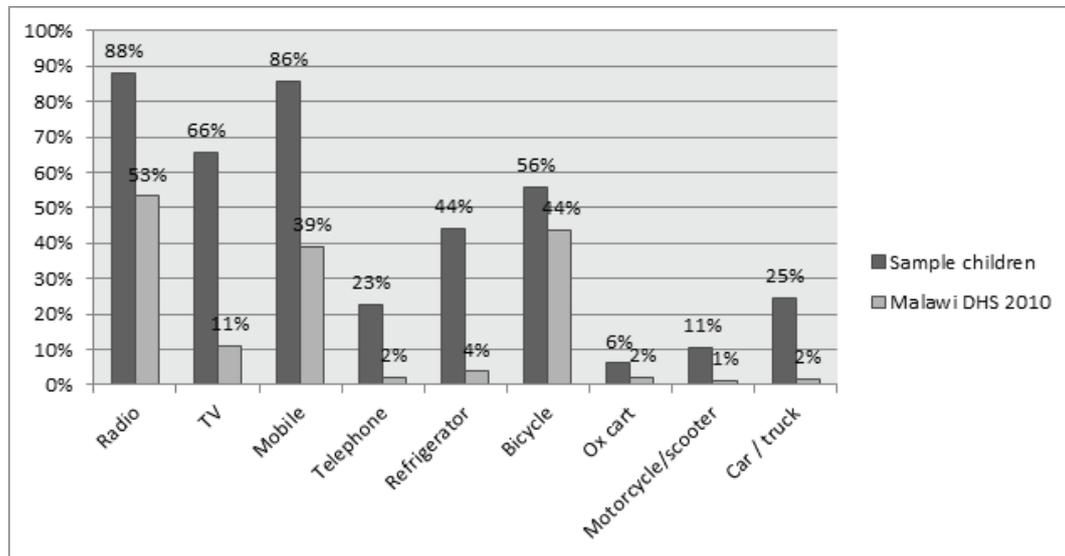


Table 24 — Percentage availability of durable goods by school

	Radio	TV	Mobile phone	Non-mobile phone	Refrigerator	Bicycle	Oxcart	Motor-cycle	Car/Truck
Grave	94	61	88	33	33	61	3	3	10
Location	89	39	82	14	21	71	7	11	4
Mzungu	86	90	91	34	68	64	7	11	34
Dwelling	93	56	78	33	28	59	6	14	13
Crack	91	94	91	59	94	26	0	13	86
Jungle	87	76	86	21	50	52	1	7	28
Rocky	79	68	90	13	30	42	4	8	15
Airport	80	41	78	3	23	63	0	1	9
Tarmac	100	40	60	0	20	100	0	0	0
Ideal	89	83	88	27	68	41	2	4	41
Effort	85	72	88	23	51	41	9	9	22
Hilly	91	41	82	7	27	81	12	16	7
Trading	100	60	93	21	31	89	29	43	39
Dambo	91	19	80	6	9	80	15	13	9
Foreign	100	75	88	44	63	69	6	31	25

Table 24 shows the availability of household durable goods by school, illustrating that there was considerable variation between schools. Crack school for example had very high rates of learners coming from households with refrigerator and car ownership, placing the families of its learners among the very wealthiest households in the country. It is notable that Crack School is the only school in the sample to be in band C in terms

of fees, with the highest fees in the sample. This illustrates powerfully the stratifying and sorting effect that fees have on enrolments. Tarmac School meanwhile had very high rates of radio and Bicycle ownership, but much lower rates of refrigerator and no learners reporting that their families owned a car, showing that the learners in that school came from a group of people that was relatively less wealthy, than Crack school. They are from a different socio-economic group, not as wealthy as those in Crack school, but still wealthy in national terms. These schools represented perhaps two different ends of the for profit private school category. Crack was in urban Blantyre and had the highest fees in our sample, it was clearly patronised by a wealthier group of people than others. Tarmac was in rural Blantyre and was among the cheapest in terms of fees.

The evidence gathered in this study overrides the assumption that for profit private secondary schools provide access to the poor, as the data gathered indicates that most learners attending these for profit private secondary schools are from among the top two quintiles by wealth in the country. Poor people in Malawi cannot afford the tuition fees in any type of secondary school, even the cheapest for profit private secondary schools.

5.5 Learning and Welfare

In this section we discuss the factors and issues that affect the teaching and learning process, and therefore academic performance in the case study schools. Private schools recognize that their survival depends on a continued supply of learners. Much of the perception of a school as being of good quality relies on the exam results. Exam results are publicised and were said to be what attracted learners to the school. These were mainly measured in terms of the pass rates in the national JCE and MSCE exams. Another measure of success is the number of learners that are selected from a secondary school to the University of Malawi and University of Mzuzu, the two large public universities in the country (which we discussed in chapter 4). The selection criteria to these universities are, like the selection to secondary schools, based on performance in national exams. Getting good results in national examinations increases the probability of being selected to the university. This makes selection to the universities difficult for many of these for profit private schools, considering the calibre of learners they attract and the conditions in which they teach and learn. In-fact only two of the 15 sampled private schools had managed to send learners to the university in the previous academic year (2011/2012). No learner from the other schools was selected to the university.

Interviews with teachers revealed that large proportions of learners in private schools had come to the schools having achieved results in their primary leaving exams that were too low for them to be accepted for selective government secondary schools. Some had enrolled after having failed their secondary level exams in another school, with the ambition to retake the exams and achieve higher grades. In addition, some of them had come to private schools after being excluded from other schools for disciplinary reasons. The general impression of teachers about learners in private schools is that learners are intellectually weak, had bad behaviour and needed constant encouragement and spoon-feeding for them to succeed. One of the teachers in the schools visited commented that:

The calibre of learners that get enrolled in private secondary schools leaves a lot to be desired. They are like rejects, those that did not formally make it to the next level of education. This makes teaching in private secondary schools difficult as the learners need to be spoon-fed and drilled if they are to do well in their national exams (MT, Grave secondary school).

5.5.1 Age in Grade

Table 25 shows the age range of learners in Form 1 and Form 4 in the sample schools who participated in the learner's survey. This shows that the age range is very wide in both forms in the sample schools. The expected age for Form 1 learners is 13 or 14 and the expected age for Form 4 pupils is 17 or 18. In this sample the ages of learners in Form 1 were between 11 and 24, and in Form 4, between 14 and 34. The average age in Form 1 was 15 and the average age in Form 4 was 19. In both forms, the majority of the learners were not within the expected age for the grade they were in. Though the average age of girls in both forms was slightly lower than that of boys, the differences were not statistically significant (Table 25).

Table 25 — Average age of Form 1 and Form 4 learners

Form	Average age		
	Boys	Girls	Total average
Form 1	15.75	14.96	15.34
Form 4	19.19	18.54	18.88

In Form 1, only 30% of the learners were the correct age for their grade, 38% of girls and 22% of boys. In Form 4, 42% of learners were the correct age for their grade, 50% of girls and 35% of boys. This and the distribution histograms below in Figures 20 and 21 indicate that there are more overage boys in the sample than girls. The grey boxes on the graphs indicate the expected age of learners in these forms, showing that the majority of learners are significantly overage for their grade. The data also show that the age range in Form 4 (20 years) is wider than in Form 1 (13 years).

Table 26 — Age range of learners in Form 1 and 4 in sample schools

	Form 1		Form 4	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Minimum age	11	11	15	14
Maximum age	24	24	34	32

Figure 16 — Age distribution of Form 1 learners

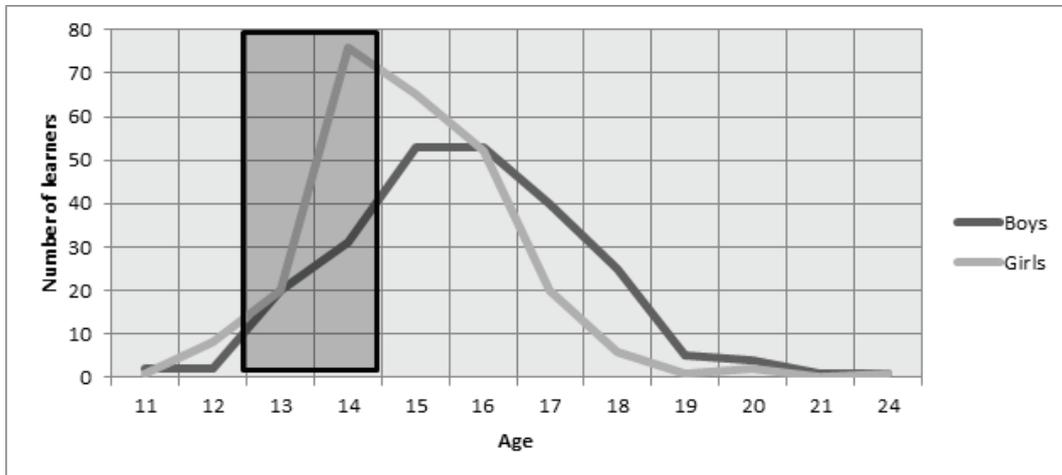
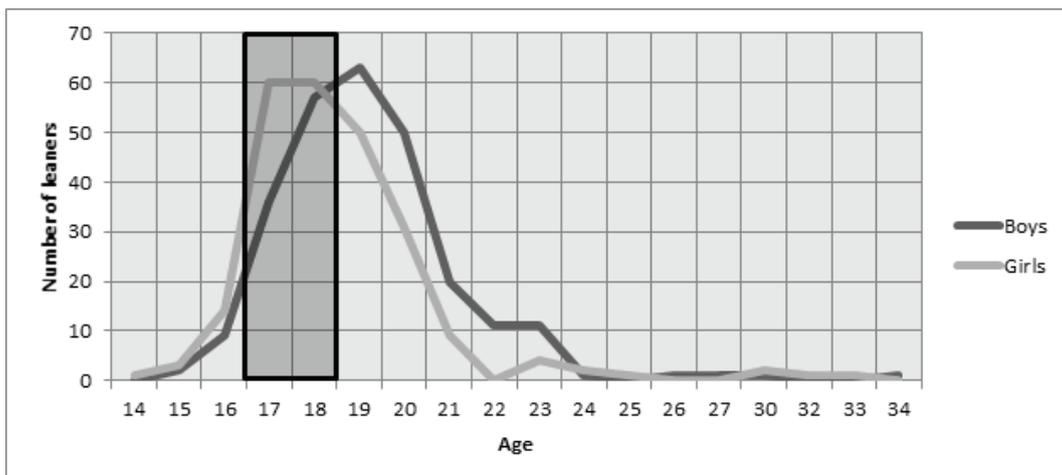


Figure 17 — Age distribution of Form 4 learners



These are self-reported ages and contain a margin of error, as birth certificates and accurate recording of ages is not universal. However, even taking this into account, the range of ages in these classes is remarkable, and was confirmed by observations of the classes, and interviews with head teachers and class teachers during the research. They reported that some of their learners were married and attending school in an attempt to get qualifications which would further their career prospects. This was confirmed by one of the directors of the visited schools who indicated that:

Some of the learners at this school are married. If you visit the classes you will find that some learners are in their late twenties and even in their thirties. They say they want to improve their grades so that they can find a job for them to take good care of their families (Director, Dwelling Secondary School).

Some learners in private schools may choose to progress through the grades faster than the expected rate as each extra year of schooling in a private school entails costs for

their parents. Learners may also be several years overage, having started school late or repeated years of education. In addition, learners reported that some of them who had failed exams in other schools or not received the grades that they wished for had entered these for profit private schools to prepare them for taking the exams again in the hope of passing. This also explains the higher enrolments in several schools in Form 4. In fact when learners were asked about what attracted them to the school, some of them mentioned that they wanted to rewrite their national exams with the hope of improving their grades for better chances of being selected to the university or finding employment in future.

5.5.2 Private Tuition

In addition to attending these for profit private schools, some learners attended private tuition after school. Table 27 reports the number of learners in for profit private school sample who attended private tutoring after school, which is known in Malawi as ‘part time teaching’. The majority (85%) of the learners did not attend part time teaching; however, a significant minority (15%) reported that they did. There did not appear to be a significant gender different between those that attended part time teaching and those that did not.

Table 27 — *Private tuition*

	Boys	Girls	Total	Percent
Learners who attended part time teaching after school	79	72	151	15%
Learners who did not attend part time teaching after school	425	415	840	85%
Total	504	487	991	

Those that did attend part time reported that they paid between MK150-10,000 (\$0.38-25) per person per month. It is hard to believe that any part time tutors would charge MK150, and it is also easy to imagine that learners may not know exactly how much their parents paid to tutors. The most commonly reported amounts were MK1,500 (\$3.75) and MK2,500 (\$6.25) per learner per month.

5.6 Teachers

There is a long-standing shortage of qualified teachers in Malawi. This leads to high PTRs, classes without teachers and many teachers who do not have adequate training. In government secondary schools, where salaries are often higher than private schools, and terms of employment more stable, there remain large numbers of unqualified or under qualified teachers. In addition, deployment and management is inefficient, meaning that teaching resources are not used as well as they could be (De Stefano, 2011).

In the private schools we studied, an average of 44% of the teachers were not qualified to teach in secondary schools. We draw a distinction between being a qualified teacher (whether the teacher has a specialised teacher training qualification) and level of education (whether the teacher was educated to secondary, diploma or degree level). Not a single school had entire teaching staff that was qualified. Some of them were

educated to degree level (in subjects unrelated to education) and some only had secondary level education. Most of these under-qualified teachers were young and had been attracted by the opportunity to work in circumstances where jobs and opportunities to train as a secondary school teacher were scarce. There were also some teachers who had retired from government service, and now taught in private schools to supplement their pensions. These teachers were fully qualified. An average of 20% of teachers in the fifteen schools were working part time while also teaching in government schools. The average masks the fact that the figure was 75% of 67% in two schools (in urban areas near a government secondary school) but the practice did not happen in more remote schools.

While the sample of learners is evenly divided by gender; the vast majority of teachers were men. This may indicate that men are exploiting the problem of lack of teachers and are taking these opportunities of extra jobs in private schools, or it may indicate a preference by school management for male teachers. Levels of turnover of teachers were very high in the schools, reaching as high as 67%, but averaging 24% across the 15 schools (Table 28). Turnover is defined as the percentage of total teachers who left the school in or at the end of the last academic year.

Table 28 — *Teacher turnover in case study schools*

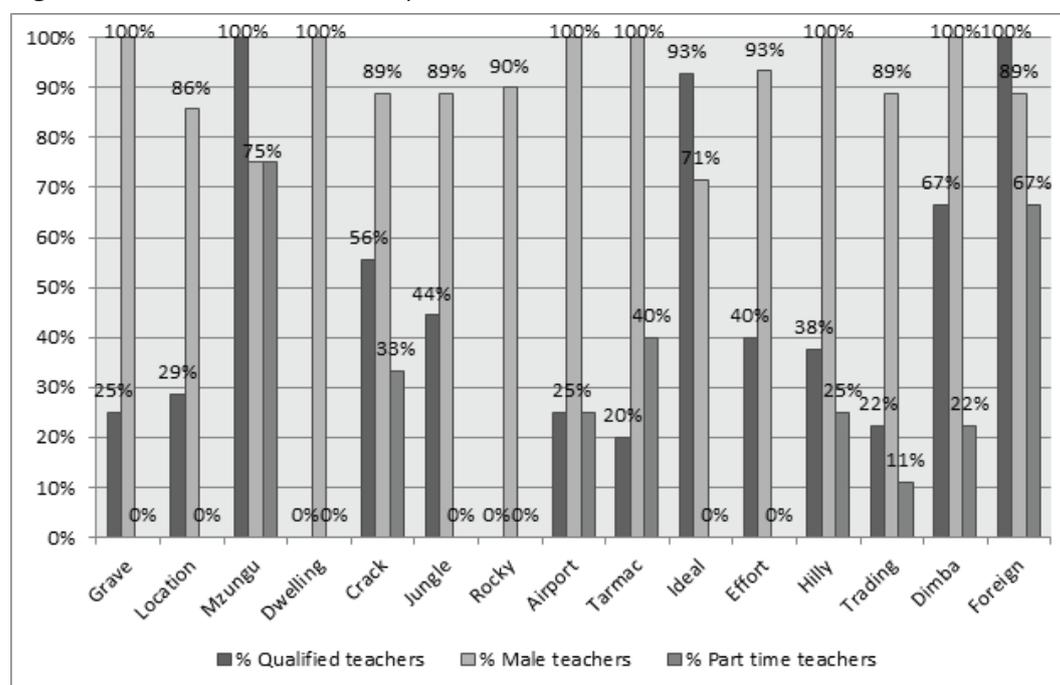
School	Teacher Turnover
Grave	13%
Location	29%
Mzungu	6%
Dwelling	67%
Crack	67%
Jungle	33%
Rocky	2%
Airport	25%
Tarmac	20%
Ideal	7%
Effort	0%
Hilly	0%
Trading	67%
Dambo	18%
Foreign	0%
Average	24%

Teachers' salaries in the schools varied from MK14,000-55,000 (\$35–138) per month. This is far less than what a government secondary school teacher earns. Salaries in government secondary schools are set nationally and start at about MK60,000 (\$150) and may go up to over MK100,000 (\$250) depending on years of experience, level of qualification and grade of employment. Additionally, teachers in government schools

receive significant non-salary benefits such as leave grant (extra money for holidays), housing allowances, pensions and in service training for professional development. In the case study schools teachers did not receive any of these benefits. Instead, in some of the schools visited, teachers received incentives for good performance, which is usually measured by learner performance in national exams such as the MSCE. As these exam results are linked to the popularity and therefore enrolment of the school, they have direct consequences for the income of the school. These motivate teachers but run the risk of encouraging ‘teaching to the test’ which can increase test scores in the short term but may not lead to sustained increased learning in the long run (Glewwe, Ilias and Kremer, 2010). These incentives also create strong incentives for teachers and private schools to cheat in national exams, an issue which has become a problem in Malawi in recent years.

Like in the government system, salaries in the case study schools also depended on the level of qualification and experience of the teacher. In addition, significant proportions of teachers in some of the schools were part time teachers (75% in one school), meaning that they had a full time job in a government secondary school, but also taught in private secondary schools, paid by the hour. Payment by the hour in the sampled schools ranged from MK500–770 (\$1.25–2) per hour per teacher. This arrangement supposedly helped the schools to maintain minimum requirements on the proportion of teachers at a school who must be qualified.

Figure 18 — Teachers in case study schools



The main reason given for working in these private secondary schools was lack of jobs on the job market. Teachers emphasized that given a choice they would rather teach in government schools where salaries were high and job security guaranteed. In addition they mentioned that they would prefer to work in government schools where they would have well established career development opportunities. We discuss these in turn.

The highest paid qualified teacher with a diploma in the case study schools earned about MK45,000 (\$113) a month when all benefits were included, though this did not apply across all cases and in most case study schools, the salaries were less than MK25,000 (\$63). Salaries are over MK60,000 (\$150) in government secondary schools. This had contributed to some instability in staffing levels at the schools as teachers were always on the look-out for better paying jobs in other organisations or were moving to other private schools that paid better salaries than their current schools. Hence staff turnover in these schools was high (Table 28).

The more successful private schools recognize a close connection between the performance of their teachers, the success of learners in examinations, and the attraction and retention of new enrolments. Much as the case study schools were aware of this fact, they seemed not to be able to create an atmosphere that would motivate the teachers. Teachers in many of the case study schools lamented their being excluded from attending career development opportunities offered to their colleagues in government schools. Their apparent marginalisation was a source of repeated concern. Nevertheless, it was learnt that the government had started inviting teachers from private secondary schools to attend some in-service trainings especially to do with curriculum orientations. However the proprietors of the private schools were required to pay a fee for their teachers to attend these sessions.

Many teachers also remarked on the difficulties of teaching pupils with a low motivation towards study and low academic achievement. As earlier mentioned, significant numbers of learners were in private schools because they had failed to gain entry to government schools, or because they had failed to complete examinations successfully. The academic standing of such learners is relatively low when compared to learners selected to government secondary schools. Hence teachers complained of a hard task to teach them to a level where they can effectively compete with their fellows in government secondary schools. One teacher lamented that:

It is difficult to teach learners in private secondary schools. Their academic backgrounds are in most cases poor. It requires a lot of effort, hard work, commitment and good will from the teacher to mould them to a desirable level to pass national examinations (FT, Jungle secondary school).

Some teachers also complained of overload and under-staffing, which resulted from the commercial orientation of their schools. It was revealed that some teachers were teaching two or more subjects across all the forms at the schools. They attributed this to inadequate staff that could not be evenly distributed across all the four forms. One teacher testified that:

My teaching load is just too much. I hardly find time to rest as I have three subjects to teach in the different forms. If I do not prepare thoroughly for my lessons during the night, then I have a tough time teaching as I cannot prepare during the day. When that happens, I end up not doing a good job in the class. Consequently the learners complain to the director that I am not teaching properly. The situation is pathetic, but what can I do? Jobs are scarce! (MT, Trading secondary school)

Teachers further complained of job insecurity in private secondary schools. They felt that proprietors could easily fire them whimsically at short notice and in some cases not even with notice. Their jobs are also subject to fluctuations in learner enrolments, and in wider economic changes over which they have no control. This was also confirmed by one of the directors of the schools that were visited who attributed understaffing to low learner enrolment at the school. He affirmed that:

With just 27 learners at the school, I cannot employ many teachers as I will not be able to pay their salaries. In fact even now, I am using my personal money to top up the salaries for the available few teachers (Director, Tarmac secondary school).

Some of the teachers who we interviewed believed that learners in private schools were difficult to control and needed strict discipline coupled with a hard working spirit among the teachers. In all the case study schools, teachers mentioned that learners in private schools give more discipline problems than learners in government secondary schools. Teachers felt the owners of the schools value the learners so much that they do not want to lose them as doing so, would take them out of business. The learners capitalize on this situation and behave any how they want. One director indicated that:

We are a bit lenient in giving punishments to offenders because we are also aware that if given very tough punishments, the learners can decide to migrate to other nearby schools. So, yes we discipline them but we take caution so as not to lose the learners. We often call their parents and discuss the issues amicably (Director, Grave Secondary School).

Despite the challenging situation for teachers and learners in many of these schools, it appears parents still consider them the best option that they can afford through which their children can access secondary education. Without these for profit private secondary schools, many of these learners would not get access to secondary school education. Parents have a choice between private secondary school or no secondary school for their children. One of the directors of the schools alluded to this when he said:

Parents or guardians of learners of our schools struggle to pay for the little tuition fees we charge in our school. This is an indication that they cannot afford the fees charged in medium or high cost secondary schools. In fact when government wanted to close our school in 2009 during the crackdown, parents cried foul and lobbied the District Education Manager not to close the school. I was advised to quickly attend to the concerns so that the learners could continue accessing their secondary education from this school (Director, Dwelling Secondary School).

The learners interviewed, who may not be representative of all the learners, tended to like the working spirit of many of the teachers as well as the monitoring of the teachers by the proprietors of the schools. This they said forces the teachers to work and commit themselves to duty. They recognised that teachers perceived the learners' shortfalls and went out of their way to help them as already highlighted in earlier paragraphs. Nevertheless the general feeling among many learners was that in an attempt to cut costs, the schools' owners often compromised on staffing levels.

5.7 Infrastructure and School Facilities

Adequate and decent facilities create a positive environment, affect the working conditions of staff and influence the learning environment (Chisholm and Motala, 1998). Availability of infrastructure such as classrooms, teachers' houses, staff rooms, head teacher's office, store rooms, libraries, laboratories and toilets renders the teaching and learning environment conducive to the teaching and learning process. Similarly availability of other school facilities such as textbooks, electricity and water is also critical to the teaching and learning process.

Classrooms should offer an enabling environment for the teaching and learning process to effectively take place. In this study, almost all of the 15 case study schools were in

purpose built classrooms although one had some of its classrooms in a dwelling house. However, many of these were constructed to low standards using cheap materials and often they showed little evidence of investment or maintenance (see Table 15, 16 and 17 for the ratings on the quality of the buildings). Ventilation as well as lighting were poor in some of the classrooms and had little or nothing in the way of decoration or learning materials on the walls. Some of the classrooms were grossly overcrowded, while others had an abundance of unused, empty space. In many of the schools there was no teachers' workspace available. Typically these schools stood on small plots of land that did not allow for expansion. Usually there were one or two buildings, with a quite typical single block of four classrooms.

None of the case study schools had accommodation for teachers. Teachers lived in their own privately rented or owned properties, sometimes at considerable distance from the school. They commuted to school by foot, bicycle or on public transport. Interviews with teachers revealed that accommodation for teachers was one of the main concerns and indeed a de-motivating factor for teaching in a private secondary school. One teacher alluded to the complexity of the problem and highlighted that:

I come from far; I take almost two hours to get to the school if I am walking or 45 minutes if I am riding a bicycle. It is not easy to get a decent house close to the school, let alone afford the rental fee if it is available. I arrive at the school very tired and exhausted to effectively discharge my duties as a teacher. Sometimes I arrive late for classes due to bicycle breakdowns. This problem is compounded by the fact that we do not receive any housing allowance (MT, Airport secondary school).

Building houses for teachers appears not to be on the priority list of proprietors for private secondary schools nor is giving housing allowances to teachers to subsidize their rental expenses.

Staffrooms and head teacher's offices were available in 80% of the schools; storerooms were seen in only 40%; libraries were in 66% while laboratories were in only 40%. In schools where there was no head teacher's office or staffroom, the available room served as both a staffroom and an administration room for the head teacher. This to some extent was seen to inconvenience mostly the head teacher who at times required privacy to discharge his/her administrative duties effectively. In fact one head teacher expressed his concern when he said that

There is no staffroom at this school as a result I share my office with the teachers. I see this as an inconvenience because, as an administrator, there are some issues that I would want to handle privately with individual teachers or learners. This arrangement does not allow for that (HT, Grave secondary school)

Toilets were available in almost all the sampled schools although at one of the schools, there were no toilets for girls, so girls had to use toilets belonging to a nearby orphanage. This was as a result of heavy rains that destroyed the toilets. New toilets were under construction at the time of the study. In most of the schools, there were insufficient toilets for the number of pupils. In other cases, teachers had no toilets and were using the same toilets with the learners. Apart from just one school, in all the schools visited, the toilets were very basic latrines in temporary structures with no plumbing. They had no hand washing facilities and were not hygienic.

Toilets are important assets in schools as they ensure good sanitation and hygiene for the good health of both the teachers and the learners in schools; therefore they need to

be given attention. Similarly, schools without any reliable water source, inconvenienced learners as well as teachers as they had to travel some distance to access water for drinking from a nearby community borehole. Twenty per cent of the schools in this study did not have water sources.

Textbooks were reportedly not available in the schools. It appears it is common practice in private schools not to provide learners with textbooks. Learners buy their own textbooks for use in class. Those that cannot afford books, come to class without textbooks. In this study, learners in Form 1 and Form 4 classes were asked whether they had their own textbook for maths and English. Only 11.8% had their own textbook for maths and 14.7% had their own textbook for English. The majority of learners either did not have access to a textbook for key subjects or had to share a textbook among a group. Textbooks facilitate the teaching and learning process. The paucity of books in schools means that learners have no means of reference during the teaching and learning process and this can limit learner participation in class.

The government does not provide textbooks for learners in private schools. It was learnt from ministry of education officials that private schools are in business and so have to source their own textbooks. Unlike in the past when prescribed textbooks were not sold in bookshops, currently the government has made a deliberate effort to sell books in designated bookshops for private schools to access and buy them for their learners. Unfortunately private school owners seem to have placed this responsibility to the guardians of the learners. One head teacher mentioned that:

The school does not provide textbooks to learners. They buy their own. The school cannot afford such an extra expense. If we struggle with the teacher's salaries, how then can I afford buying textbooks for learners? (Director, Tarmac Secondary School)

As for desks, there may be benches and chairs in many classrooms, but it was common to find learners sharing benches or chairs, having to stand or sit on the floor, and many of the learners did not have desks or had to share desks with others. Data from the survey of learners showed that 37.5% of the learners had their own desk to work on, while 32.3% of the learners shared a desk with others, beyond the intended capacity of the desk. That means in effect that they had to work in cramped conditions in their classes. 30.3% of the learners had no desk to work on; they either worked on their laps, on benches or on the floor of the classrooms. Observations of the classes in case study schools confirmed this. This raises concerns about the teaching and learning conditions in for profit private schools.

In terms of availability of electricity, the study noted that electricity was found in only 33% of the sampled schools. The rest did not have electricity. This inconvenienced not only learners who wanted to study during the night if they live close to the school or they are boarders, but also teaching of some practical subjects such as physical science and biology.

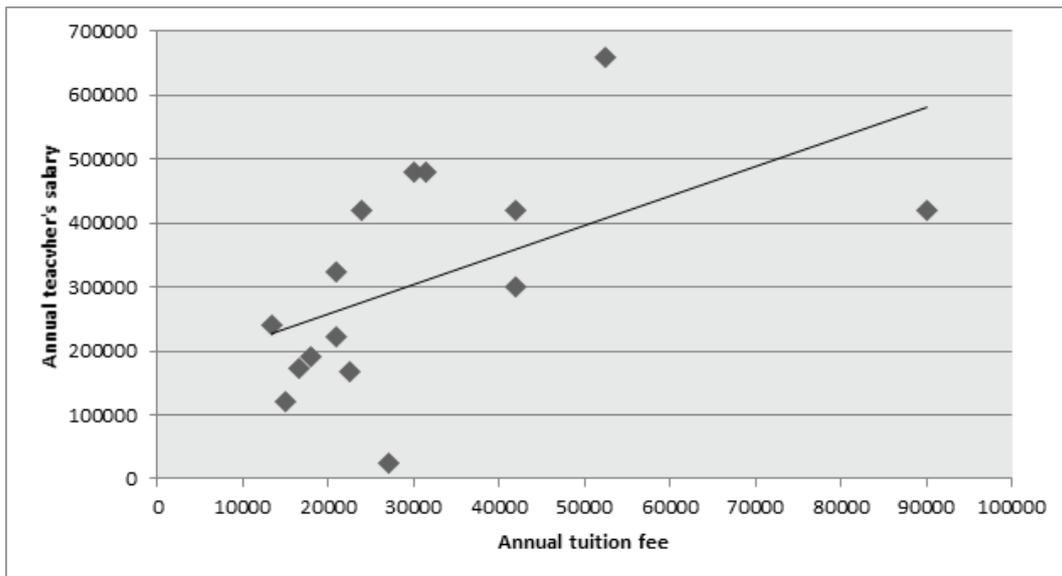
From the evidence gathered on infrastructure, the case study schools have a long way to go in ensuring that the infrastructure in the schools is safe, pleasant and of good quality. In some cases schools did have reasonably good facilities that were cared for and maintained, but in others there was evidence of a lack of investment, care and attention to the facilities and environment of the school. In many schools toilets were primitive and unhygienic and classrooms were dark and uninspiring. This suggests that

the schools’ managements do not value the safety, security, and well-being of learners or the teaching and learning environment very highly.

5.8 Finances

School fees in the case study schools varied from MK4,500–30,000 (\$11.25–75) per learner per term. Fees appeared to be determined by proprietors acting alone and making market judgements of how much they could charge in addition to assessing the affordability levels of the targeted population. Figure 19 below illustrates the relationship between annual fees and annual teacher salaries in the case study schools. This shows that teacher salaries and fees are positively correlated, but there is some variation in the ratio between them, indicating that some schools are more profitable than others. There is a wide range in teacher salaries even in schools in the lowest fee bands. One school, Crack (the point to the right of the chart below) charges fees much higher than other schools, but the average teacher’s salary is similar to other schools with lower fees.

Figure 19 — Annual tuition fees and salaries in case study schools



In the case study schools there was no publicly available information on finances. In all cases it appeared that salaries took up a large proportion of expenditure, but it was hard to estimate how much. Non-teacher costs included the costs of salaries of support staff, the costs of utilities, furniture, and building maintenance. In many schools visited, the impression from observations on the quality and condition of school infrastructure and facilities was that these costs were kept to a bare minimum. Learners bought their own uniforms, books, stationary and food. They also paid exam and registration fees. Many of these schools appeared to spend almost nothing on learning materials.

Wholly private schools rely directly on fee income to survive and are sensitive to declines in learner numbers. They benefit greatly from economies of scale to the extent of providing incentives to learners who bring in learners from other schools to enrol at the school as this contributes to increases in class sizes. In some of the case study schools additional fees, on top of the tuition fees and boarding fees included an admission

fee for registration at the school, which was about MK1,000 (\$2.50), payable once on entry. Exam registration fees of about MK4,000 (\$10) for JCE and MSCE are charged to parents, the school's uniforms may cost MK7,000–10,000 (\$17.5–25) per learner per year or whenever needed.

It was impossible from the data to establish how profitable private secondary schools may be. It was clear from what head teachers and ISAMA said, that the objectives of school owners were to run the school at a profit, as a business. It was noted in this study however that the schools may not realize as much profit during the early years. In fact in some of the case study schools the proprietors lamented that they were operating at a loss and had to use their personal money from other businesses to pay the teachers. Nevertheless they do not give up because they know that they will start making good profits once the schools get established.

5.9 Conclusions

From the synthesis of the case studies, it is apparent that these schools are, on the whole, not delivering a very high quality of education. They may be providing access to secondary education but the financial model compromises the quality of education. Most are running without governing boards to provide checks and balances to management; the infrastructure is mostly in deplorable condition. Most of the schools have no bank accounts or records for financial transactions. Teaching and learning materials such as textbooks and writing materials are not provided to learners; desks and other teaching and learning resources are not in adequate quantities. Many of these schools rely heavily on unqualified teachers; teachers have no job security, housing allowance, leave grants, pension and other non-salary benefits. Some of the schools have high staff turnover due to the poor working conditions.

Nevertheless the schools sampled provide access for secondary education to some who might not have otherwise had any secondary education. Better governance, regulation of schools and more transparency in terms of fees and expenditure would improve trust in schools and allow better proposals for improving quality. Investment in proper management structures, teachers and infrastructure is needed in schools.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

In Malawi the 'market' for secondary education is small, very limited by a lack of supply and limits to demand due to costs of secondary education that are beyond all but the wealthiest 20% of the population. Competition is therefore severely constrained and appears not to have an effect on performance. There are few places in Malawi where there is real competition between schools. One of the roles of ISAMA is to regulate competition between its members, by avoiding schools being too close together and fixing price bands linked to government school types. Private secondary schools do compete with government schools in some places, at the lower end of the market they compete with ODSS and CDSS. ISAMA has campaigned to close down low quality government schools.

Some private secondary schools located close to government schools compete directly with them for students. This can result in inefficiencies and destructive role than constructive relationships between schools. A policy is needed to guide and manage the location of private schools, ensure that they are likely to be viable without undermining the adjacent government schools, and encourage increased provision in underserved areas. Due to the very limited supply of government secondary education, many private schools absorb excess demand from those families wealthy enough to pay and with children who did not perform well enough in exams to gain entry to competitive, high quality government schools. Private secondary schools introduce competition in very few locations, in ways that are determined by their association and the limits to supply and demand. This is a long way from being a free and competitive market, or one that is regulated to ensure improving access, quality and equity in secondary education.

The evidence from this study is that private secondary schools predominantly respond to two different kinds of demand from households. The number of places available at secondary school in Malawi has been restricted for many years and many more wish to attend than have the opportunity to go to attend schools. For households in the top quintile by wealth, this excess demand can be met by paying privately. The second group of parents express a kind of differentiated demand in the belief that quality and character of private secondary schools is superior to that of government schools.

Private schools in Malawi have a lot of autonomy in their management. Apart from a one off inspection of schools and the closure of a few schools with very poor facilities and teaching staff, there is virtually no regulation of the sector. Schools appear to be allowed to operate with no governing bodies, proper accounts or records. Autonomy is part of the problem in the Malawian context, rather than part of the solution. More, firmer regulation is needed to ensure that schools provide good quality education in safe and healthy environments for children.

To ensure greater transparency and accountability private secondary schools which are licensed and regulated should publish annual accounts which are independently audited, provide standardised information on examination performance at JCE and MSCE, maintain public list of staff members and attendance, and share details of school development plans. Protocols should be developed for the collection of school fees and the obligations of both parents and schools in relation to the fee-paying participation. This should address questions of the mechanism for raising fees periodically, clear

indications of what fees cover and do not cover, procedures related to non-payment and the protection of children's continuous education experience, curriculum specifications, and facilities. Government ministries and district education offices must publish lists of registered schools, so that parents can make informed choices about schools. Clear categories for licensing and registration are needed which distinguish between for profit and not-for-profit organisations, make clear the legal status of the school as an organisation and employer and identify what obligations exist to pay different taxes including corporate taxes and VAT.

Many for profit private schools appear to operate very 'efficiently'. Their owners extract the maximum that they can in fees and other costs, and invest the minimum possible in maintaining infrastructure, providing teaching and learning materials. The infrastructure available in a proportion of the private secondary schools in our case study sample is inadequate and insufficient to lead to the sustained achievement of national learning goals. This means in practice that many learners in for profit private schools do not have chairs to sit on, desks to write on, textbooks, clean toilets, places to wash their hands, water to drink or safe, dry, well lit classrooms. The owners of for profit private schools regard them as businesses and run them accordingly, to maximise profit. In many cases they appear to make very healthy profits. This level of efficiency is not desirable. A more 'inefficient' system where schools have higher costs but provide a better education for children in a safe environment seems to us to be preferable. Licensing and regulation should incorporate plans to ensure that registered schools meet minimum standards and improve over time towards national norms of provision.

The contracts held by teachers in Malawian private schools, or the almost total lack of them, encourage short termism by teachers and school management. There is evidence of high turnover in the private school sector, which is likely to result in discontinuities in children's educational participation. We also find that there is considerable volatility of enrolments in case study schools from year to year. Low levels of achievement are likely to be associated with discontinuities in schooling. It is important to develop strategies to reduce the number of schools children attend, especially if they are in the private sector.

Teachers in private schools are employed in many different ways, are often not qualified as teachers, and may be paid below the daily poverty line. Protocols should exist for the employment of teachers in licensed and registered private schools, which conform to national legislation on employment practices. The teachers should be paid wages above the poverty line, and should never collect fees directly from students. Eventually most private school teachers hope to secure employment in the government sector where wages are higher, conditions of employment better and there are opportunities for career development. The incentive structure linked to exam results, may improve results, but these do not mean real learning has happened. These structures create incentives for teaching to the test, exam cramming, superficial learning, rote memorisation and corruption.

Performance in private schools overall (all types of private schools) is better than the least competitive form of government secondary provision, but this masks extreme diversity within the private sector and the effect of socio-economic status on performance, which is a more likely explanation for the difference than school type. Performance in private schools is not better on average than more competitive government schools with

professional, qualified teachers on long term contracts. There is no evidence to suggest from this that the more autonomous private sector with greater power to hire and fire teachers outperforms the government sector in performance.

Private school owners in Malawi do take risks; they invest their own money in land and infrastructure, hire teachers and set up as a business. So risky is much of their business that banks are not willing to finance it without high interest rates and collateral. Private school owners are unwilling to open schools in chains to maximise their profits and efficiencies due to the risks and lack of trust in manager and sub-contractors. The antagonistic relationship between private school owners and the government means that there is unlikely to be risk sharing between private school owners and the government in the short term. Risk sharing must come with regulation and transparency, which are both in short supply at the moment.

6.1 Areas for Further Research

- Better data is needed on the locations, numbers and nature of for profit private schools in Malawi. There is now more data than there was in 2003, but there is still inadequate data on how many private schools open and close, where they are, who owns and runs them, what their fees are and some way of disaggregating them into bands or types of schools.
- Extension of the study to include for profit private schools at primary level covering similar issues to those at secondary level and identifying any specific issues at primary level.
- More detailed analysis of supply and demand and patterns of attendance using school mapping techniques to locate provision and rates of take-up in relation to population density, proximity to roads, location in towns and cities.
- Identification of areas in schools where there is a high turnover of children in private schools coupled with illustrative case studies to establish the extent of transfer between schools and the likely length of a school career within each school for different groups of students.
- A sub study of teachers working in private schools to acquire more information about who they are, how they are employed, how frequently they change jobs and move from school to school, and whether or not the characteristics of teachers prepared to work in the schools limits their location and the extent to which they can reach into poor rural areas.
- Close enquiry into the financing of private schools in relation to fee structures, income from fees and other sources, default rates on fee payments, and information on costs including salaries of teachers and other staff, learning materials, building maintenance, and any building costs, mortgages, and loans that may exist and need to be serviced.
- Household level surveys of how families afford the costs and what proportion of household income fees represent in these private for profit secondary schools. This should allow judgements to be made as to whether those attending of only from the top quintile of household income or from other quintiles.

- We were unable to identify innovatory pedagogic practice in the schools we visited. Our observations suggest that their potential to develop beyond chalk and talk and a 'banking' view of knowledge may be very limited. A study of pedagogy and curriculum in a sample of private schools in the mid to low fee range could be very illuminating if it established what potential there was to improve practice. It should also compare what happens in the private schools with what happens in a comparable sample of public schools to establish if many of the assertions made about private schools have a basis in fact.
- Using primary school leavers examination data and matching that with the same candidates at JCE and MSCE level would enable a 'value added' study of school types to show how different school types support the learning of children rather than relying on one-off national exam result averages.
- If there is the opportunity to do a randomised control trial looking at the characteristics and performance of samples of public and private schools this should be considered.

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