



Analysis of the Provision of Primary Education in Malawi

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Paper Presented (On-line) at the Comparative and International Education Society Conference, Washington DC 15th February 2023

Map of Africa showing Malawi (in red)



Context of the study

- Malawi is a low-income country, ranked 174 out of 180 countries on the human development index [HDI] (UNDP, 2020).
- Primary education in Malawi is for eight years - grades 1 to 8. The formal age for starting primary school is 6 years and the expected completion age is 14 years.
- At primary level, grade promotion is determined by end of term summative test scores. Those who do not meet the set threshold repeat the grade.
- Quality of education is affected by factors such as socio-economic status, rurality, quality of school infrastructure, provision of teaching and learning materials, etc. (National Statistics Office, 2020).

Policy context of the study

- Malawi embarked on education for all since 1994 after the abolition of primary school user fees.
- The government enacted the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) in 2007 and this was implemented for ten years (2008 – 2017) to foster equitable primary education through.
 - ❖ expanded equitable access to education to enable all to benefit,
 - ❖ improved quality and relevant education to reduce drop-out and repetition and promote effective learning, and
 - ❖ improved governance and management of education to enable more effective and efficient delivery of services (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2008, p. v).
- The equitable education plan was underpinned by international protocols such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and latterly, Sustainable Development Goal 4.
 - ❖ Equitable education reduces social and economic divisions and fosters national cohesion and global equity (UN, 2015).

Theoretical framework James's (2007) equity principles

- a. Those who have the ability can participate in [primary school and transition to secondary school] without hindrance.
- b. There are no barriers to access to [primary school education].
- c. The progress across primary grades is without discrimination based on socio-economic status, gender, geography, religion, or ethnicity
- d. All [primary learners] have the same opportunity to develop their individual talents.

Our research question was:

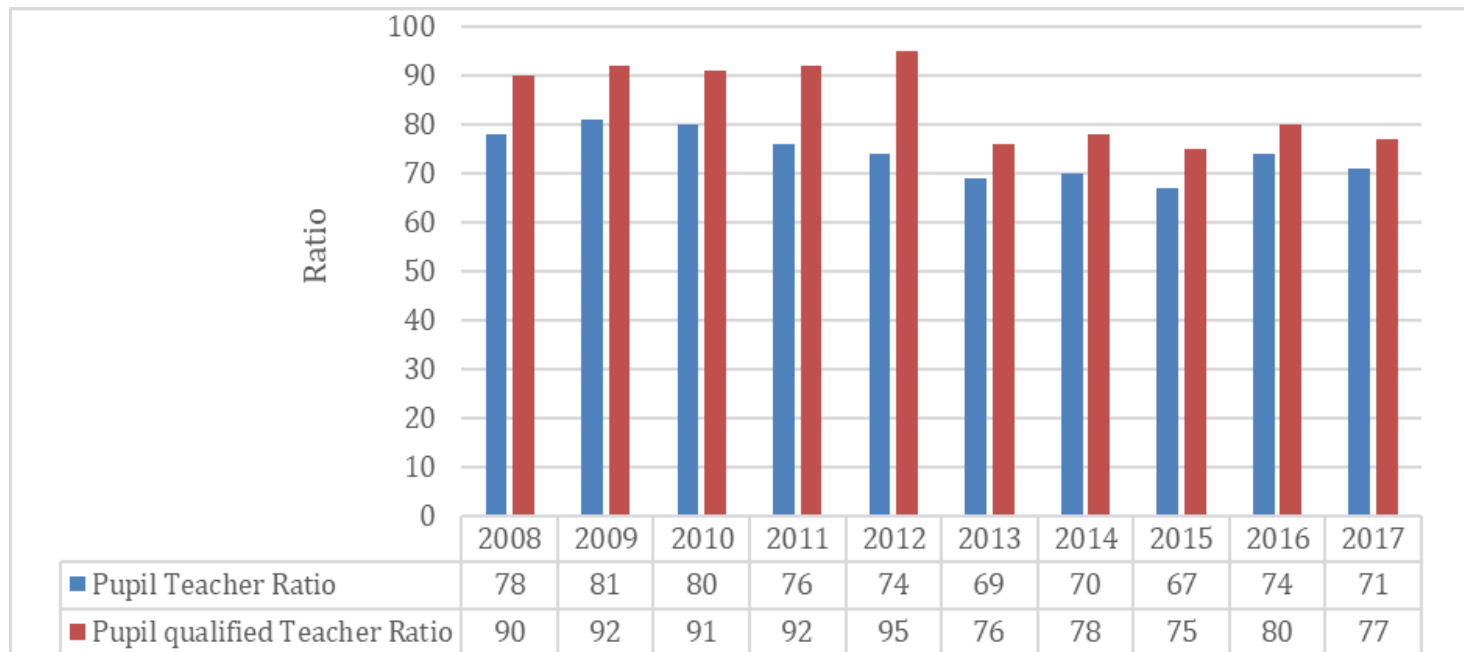
- ***What does the EMIS datasets tell us about the provision of primary education in Malawi during NESP (2008 to 2017) period?***

Methods: Secondary data analysis

- We sought permission from a senior official in the Ministry of Education to re-use the data set and this was granted.
- We focused on secondary data from EMIS primary school education statistics from 2008 to 2017.
- EMIS data are collected annually by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.
- The foreword to the EMIS statistics 2008 (MoEST, 2008) states:
 - ‘The education statistics bulletin is an important activity [...] of the ministry because it provides us with an opportunity to analyse the extent to which the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) (2008-2017) is being realised.’

Summary of findings

i. Quality of Teaching and Learning



Student-Teacher Ratio and Student-Qualified Teacher Ratio

ii. Wastage Associated with Grade Repetition (Retention)

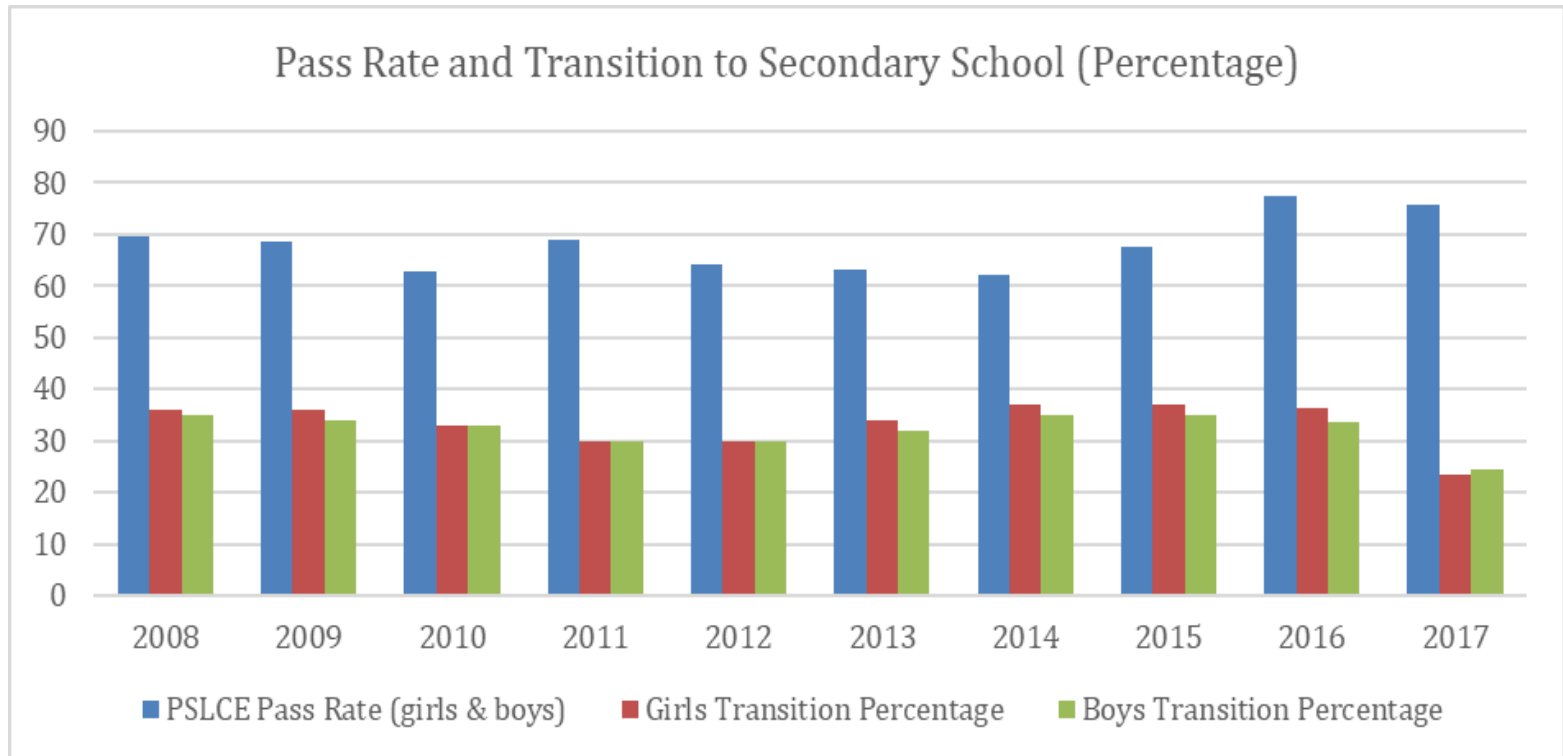
National Pattern of Student Repetition in Primary Grades 1 and 8

Year	Grade 1(number and percentage)		Grade 8 (number and percentage)	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
2008	106,909 (24.75)	107,918 (26.00)	12902 (17.56)	18344 (19.79)
2009	100701 (21.9)	99924 (22.74)	13207 (15.93)	17459 (16.48)
2010	106767(13.73)	107816(11.71)	13013 (14.86)	16291 (15.38)
2011	110973(24.87)	108926 (24.53)	16800 (17.76)	20859 (18.92)
2012	107535 (20.17)	107442 (21.04)	18409 (16.46)	22189 (16.63)
2013	117395 (24)	119230 (25)	19809 (19)	23995 (19)
2014	130433 (26.83)	129364 (29.5)	21080 (19.33)	26055 (19.5)
2015	** 26.9	** 27.8	** 20.7	** 21.9
2016	** 28.1	** 29.5	** 22.7	** 24.1
2017	163551 (30.9)	170552 (31.6)	22273 (18.0)	28744 (20.1)

iii. Wastage Associated with School Dropout

Year	Reasons for Student Dropout											
	Poverty or poor facilities		Distance to school		Pregnancy / marriage	Employment		Family responsibility		Other reasons		Dropout rate (%)
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
2008	1087	1040	**	**	8438	3909	5746	32402	32411	30306	32907	11.59
2009	3716	4462	5942	6168	11994	3923	6619	35634	37181	37763	33486	11.69
2010	3479	3514	7419	7449	2365	3546	5440	29789	29043	29464	33253	10.25
2011	3360	3188	7505	7578	9055	3191	5211	30086	29182	31110	34196	10.67
2012	3372	3399	8200	8196	9198	2628	4259	29873	29678	34804	36907	**
2013	4309	3821	9882	8937	10025	2669	4545	32218	31692	35154	37376	10.87
2014	2922	2665	9070	8904	9315	215	350	30321	29308	33181	35743	14.62
2015	4123	3827	8784	8760	9029	2144	3943	24984	24902	33760	36634	**
2016	4010	3502	8988	10338	8822	2286	3973	25145	25247	36602	40053	**
2017	4.4	3.2	9.7	10.4	13.6	2.1	4.3	25.9	28.1	3.8	10.3	10.52

iv. Inefficient Transition from Primary to Secondary School



Conclusion

- The principles within James' (2007) equity framework enabled us to further critically analyse EMIS datasets.
- The structural inequities found in our study transcend the NESP period.
- Government needs to consider identifying sustainable funding to support the primary-secondary sectors.

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