

**IMPLEMENTATION OF OUTCOME BASED EDUCATION (OBE) IN MALAWI
PRIMARY SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF RUMPHI DISTRICT**

Dissertation

By

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife Nengezi and son Symon who I always missed during my studies and all those who have been instrumental towards my studies.

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ABSTRACT

Malawi adopted Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in 2001 reflected in the primary curriculum and assessment reform (PCAR). This study aimed at investigating the implementation of OBE in Malawi primary schools. Specifically, the study intended to investigate the experiences of teachers and explore opportunities and challenges in the process of implementing OBE during its early years of introduction. The study used qualitative approach within the interpretive paradigm. The study involved fifteen teachers from four schools. It also involved four school heads and two Primary Education Advisors. The results of the study show that there is a general satisfaction with the intentions of the new curriculum citing frequent assessment of learners which help track learners performance, and learner involvement in the teaching and learning process. However, teachers expressed a general dissatisfaction with too much and strenuous assessment record work which compromise the goals of OBE. This has bred dishonesty in writing records in order to impress the Supervisors/Inspectors. This counters OBE principles. Constrained environment of inadequate teaching and learning resources, large class sizes and inadequate training were the recurrent themes in the study. In light of the results, there is need to put much effort towards rigorous teacher professional development and consider revising some of the assessment tools. Further, the provision of teaching and learning resources and improvement in class size should be prioritized by both the MoEST and the responsible schools.

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ACROYNMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

C2000:	Curriculum 2005
EDM:	Education Division Manager
DEM:	District Education Manager
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
GoM:	Government of Malawi
InWent:	Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gGmbH
LCA:	Learner Centred Approaches
MIE:	Malawi Institute of Education
MGDS:	Malawi Government Development Strategy
MOE:	Ministry of Education
MoEST:	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NER:	Net Enrollment Ratio
OBE:	Outcome-Based Education
PIF :	Policy and Investment Framework
PCAR:	Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform
PEA:	Primary Education Advisor
SACMEQ:	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
TTC:	Teachers Training College

UK: United Kingdom

UNESCO: United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Chapter overview

Malawi adopted Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in 2001. This marked a significant shift in education philosophy, from teacher-centred to learner-centred education (MOE and MIE, 2007). This study aimed at investigating the implementation of OBE in Malawi primary schools by specifically focusing on teacher experiences three years after the OBE implementation. This chapter provides a background to the study. This is followed by, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, and finally significance of the study.

1.2. OBE in Malawi

The Malawi government through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) adopted OBE for primary school curriculum in 2001. OBE was introduced in Malawi through primary curriculum and assessment reform (PCAR). The adoption of OBE marked a significant shift in the education philosophy in Malawi primary school. Under OBE approach, teacher's role changed to that of a facilitator and learners to active participants in the learning process. In addition to learner-centred approaches, the new system embraced continuous assessment as an integral part to the learning process (MOE and MIE, 2007).

The implementation of OBE started in phases beginning with standard one in 2001. This was followed by standard two, five and six in 2008 (MIE, 2008). The implementation covered the rest of the primary school classes in 2009. The implementation of OBE in primary school was thought to be a panacea for the education woes characterized by the 1991 curriculum. According to various studies, the 1991 curriculum failed to live to its expectation of fulfilling the government commitment to Education for all (EFA) goals. The curriculum faced various implementation problems which include high teacher and pupil absenteeism, high drop out rate, high repetition rate and low survival rate (Kambankadzanja, 2005; Chimombo, Banda, Mchikoma, 2001; Bisika, 2005).

While the new primary school curriculum offered hope to improve quality of education in Malawi, it is not known whether the introduction of OBE considered the criticism levelled against it in other countries. Literature surrounding OBE controversy clearly shows that OBE as a reform marks a radical departure to the way classes were organised in the teacher-centred orientation. Beside this, the reform requires a high caliber of teachers, dedicated teachers and a resource rich environment among others. There is evidence that Malawi is still grappling in the education sector due to lack of qualified teachers and resource constraints and yet hopes that a change to OBE would reverse the education woes. This creates a problematic picture in the implementation of OBE.

In addition, the primary school curriculum in Malawi has prescribed curriculum content and is time-based (Kaambankadzanja, 2005). These are not consistent with the principles

of OBE, thereby becoming one of the first challenges for teachers since they have to reconcile the two inconsistent philosophies merged in PCAR.

Further, the new curriculum considers continuous assessment as integral to teaching and learning, however, the Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB) does not incorporate continuous assessment grades from schools. It is against this background that the study aimed at investigating how teachers experience the implementation of OBE in primary schools.

1.3. Problem statement

A number of studies have revealed that OBE faces a number of challenges. For instance, United States of America which is considered as a pioneer country in introducing OBE, concerns about OBE were raised a few years after it began gaining popularity (Schlafly, 1993). Related concerns were raised in Australia (Berlach and McNaught, 2007) and South Africa (Jansen, 1998).

In Malawi, although it is perceived that the reform to OBE would improve education standards, the nature of PCAR is at variance with some OBE principles. The potential challenge for primary school teachers in Malawi is to reconcile the conflicting paradigms which have been merged in PCAR. For instance, the primary school curriculum is still prescriptive and time based.

Consequently, the challenge for teachers is to provide students with individual attention, regular assessment, and active learner involvement while at the same time, teachers are expected to finish the prescribed curriculum content within the specified time.

This challenge is further compounded with the fact that the paradigm shift to learner-centred education is not consistent with the way that most teachers in Malawi were trained. This problem is even further exacerbated by limited or lack of professional development opportunities for teachers in Malawian primary schools due to lack of proper management of teacher professional development (Hango, 2005; Mizrachi, Padilla and Banda, 2010). Based on such backdrop and challenge, this study sought to understand the experience of teachers in the implementation of OBE in primary schools.

1.4. Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of teachers in the implementation of OBE in Malawi primary schools. Specifically, the study sought to understand teaching opportunities, problems and challenges that teachers are experiencing in the process of implementing OBE.

1.4. Research Questions

This study sought to understand the process of OBE implementation within the Malawian primary school context with a focus on teacher experience. The following main research question guided the study:

How are primary school teachers experiencing the process of implementing the OBE in primary schools in Malawi?

The following were the specific research questions

- i. What do teachers in Malawi know about OBE?
- ii. How has the OBE curriculum affected the teaching and learning process?
- iii. What kind of institutional support do teachers get from Ministry of Education, School Heads and Primary Education Advisors on OBE implementation?
- iv. What are the challenges/ problems and opportunities that teachers face in implementing OBE?

1.5. Significance of the study

The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) (MGDS, 2006), Policy and Investment Framework (PIF), Vision 2020, and National Education Sector Plan for 2008-2017 clearly stipulate the importance of education towards socio-economic development of an individual and the country. Primary education is particularly important: for around 90% of children in Malawi it is their sole access to formal education (Kaambankadzanja, 2002). It is therefore imperative to ensure that the implementation of OBE will lead to realisation of primary school education goals.

This study is expected to offer some insights to teacher education program on how to respond to the needs of teachers who are going to implement the OBE curriculum. Further, the study provides useful feedback to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology on the experiences of teachers in the OBE reform. The information is likely to help decision makers with relevant information on areas which require intervention or improvement in the implementation of OBE.

This study also provides feedback to curriculum developers. This feedback is very useful for improving the current and subsequent teacher education programs and curriculum reforms in Malawi. Finally, this study is expected to stimulate further debate and research on OBE, which has just been embraced in Malawi's primary school and is expected to extend to secondary school and tertiary education.

1.7. Organization of the study

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. Chapter one provides the background, the problem statement, purpose and the significance of the study. Chapter two details the literature review on OBE with examples from various contexts and its associated debate. This chapter also discusses the implementation of education change and finally provides the conceptual framework that guided the study. Chapter three outlines the methodology of the study and its justification. Chapter four presents the findings and discussions of the study; finally chapter five provides the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

1.8. Chapter summary

In this chapter I have provided the background of the adoption of OBE in Malawi primary school curriculum. The new curriculum marks a departure in the way teaching and learning were conducted in the previous curriculum. Among others, teachers are considered as facilitators of knowledge rather than givers. Learners are supposed to be active participants in the teaching and learning process.

However, the situation in primary schools seems not to be conducive for the implementation of the OBE curriculum. Studies have shown that most schools have inadequate qualified staff, overcrowding among others. Following, these potential threats, I have argued for the need to carry out the study on OBE to find out primary school teacher experiences in the process of implementing the new curriculum.

I have noted that the findings of this study would help curriculum developers, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, teacher training institutions and other concerned stakeholders to have feedback on the implementation process. Finally, I have highlighted how the dissertation is organised.

The next chapter provides literature review on OBE and curriculum implementation in detail. It outlines the meaning of OBE and its major philosophical underpinnings. It highlights the debate with specific reference to countries which embraced OBE. Finally the chapter looks at OBE in Malawian context and curriculum implementation.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Chapter Overview

This section provides a review of literature on OBE. It starts with global trends in education and later explores the meaning of OBE and concepts anchoring it. In addition, it draws literature on experiences of USA, Australia and South Africa in the implementation of OBE. This is followed by the debate associated with OBE, then the description of OBE in Malawian context. Finally, the chapter ends with a review of literature on some issues surrounding curriculum implementation and then presents the conceptual framework guiding the study.

2.2. Global trends in education

The period from around 1980 to the 1990s was characterised as an era of education reform and restructuring across the world. Significant to these reforms was a shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred teaching approaches. In teacher-centred approaches the teacher assumes the role of an information giver whereas in learner-centred approaches, a teacher assumes the role of a facilitator in the teaching and learning process, and the learner is actively involved in the learning process (Brooks and Brooks, 1993). OBE is the education reform which represents a shift from teacher to learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning.

The United States started implementing OBE in the 1980's (Manno, 1994). Similarly, in the 1990s, Poland, (Ziemicki, 1999) and Russia (Stern, 1999), also carried out drastic reforms of the curriculum following the fall of the Soviet Union. The new reforms in these countries marked the break from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches. The fall of communism and the advent of capitalism in the Soviet Union brought in democratic values which necessitated restructuring of the education system and the curriculum to reflect the changes (Stern, 1999). This wave of reform towards learner-centred approaches by adopting OBE extended to the Australian education system in the 1990's (Donnelly, 2007).

These reforms did not spare Africa as Tabulawa (1998) observed that the education pedagogical reforms since 1980 in Botswana were compelled by global change. He pointed out that the authoritarian regimes slowly gave way to political system based on principle of western liberal participatory democracy. This fuelled the need for more participatory learning to nurture and protect the emerging democracies.

The quantitative growth in enrolment in Botswana resulted into decline in the quality of education; as a result a shift from teacher to learner-centred curriculum in order to address the failure of teacher-centred approach was thought to be a solution.

Additionally, the Republic of South Africa embraced OBE in curriculum 2005 (C2005) which was announced in 1997 soon after the end of apartheid (Botha, 2002; Jansen, 1998). In line with the reforms towards OBE, Eliot (2004) argues that OBE is favoured because it provides a framework of practical rules for designing teaching intervention and measuring teaching effectiveness.

However, studies have shown that OBE is shrouded in a heated debate. Baron and Floyd (1996) observed that OBE has emerged as one of the most promising, yet controversial school reform effort. These studies have shown that the growing shift of education from teacher-centred to learner-centred has resulted in protracted debate among various stakeholders who either support or oppose it. The central issue coming out clearly in OBE debate revolves around the ideological shift and implementation problems.

2.3. Definition of OBE

Spady (1994) who is considered as the father and architect of OBE defines OBE as clearly focusing and organising everything in an education system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. Similarly, Acharya (2003) defines OBE as a method of curriculum design and teaching that focuses on what students can actually do after they are taught. She further states that OBE addresses four key questions such as: What do you want the students to learn? Why do you want them to learn it? How can you best help students learn it? And, how will you know what they have learnt?

Further, WAEC, 1995 in Donnelly (2007), state that outcome-based education is where a school and community first determine skills and knowledge students should possess at a graduation and then work backwards to develop curriculum strategies and materials in order to help students achieve those goals or exit outcomes.

Spady (1994) identifies outcomes as clear learning results that students are supposed to demonstrate at the end of significant learning experience. This means that outcomes are actions and performances that reflect learner's competence in using content, information, ideas, and tools successfully. Other scholars such as Faouzi, Lansari, AL-Rawi, and Abonamah 2003 (cited in Majid, 2008) add that learning outcomes in the context of OBE are the observable and measurable performance of the students.

Further, Donnelly (2007) articulates that the focus on outcomes relates to the need to measure education effectiveness in terms of students learning. Instead of measuring the success of schooling based on inputs such as money, number of teachers, and class size, the intention is to measure improvement on students learning. According to Spady (1994) this represents a shift in the way school systems operate.

It is clear from the definition of OBE that the primary focus of OBE is to ensure that an individual learner is able to demonstrate the exit outcome at the end of their learning experience.

2.3.1. Versions of OBE

Spady 1993 in Donnelly (2007) states that there are three types of outcome-based educational approaches and these are; traditional OBE, transitional OBE and transformational OBE.

Firstly, the traditional OBE approach to curriculum is established on subject disciplines. In this approach there is strong focus on content and year level organisation. In addition, it is defined in terms of measuring student's mastery of the set curriculum. Secondly, the departure from teaching subjects to cultivate higher order competencies, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills, constitute transitional OBE. In this version the focus moves away from the classroom to defining what students need to be successful after graduation in terms of lifelong learning. Finally, transformational OBE is in opposition to traditional approaches. Its approach is future oriented, and it focuses on the broad role performance capabilities of young people and their ability to do complex tasks in real settings relating directly to life. In transformational OBE, learning is no longer based on year levels and the belief that students must succeed in a set period.

A careful analysis of the recent primary school curriculum reform in Malawi, reveals that it has embraced the traditional based OBE. This is so because there are similar characteristics being shared. For instance, the prescribed textbooks, prescribed content, use of same syllabus across the country and adherence to the timetable.

Despite recognising all the three types of OBE, Spady strongly advocates for transformational OBE. He refers to the traditional and transitional OBE as content based curriculum (Spady, 2007). Spady argues that traditional OBE does not give a clear picture on what students will be able to do in future but it is rather concerned with success in schools (Willis and Kissane, 1995).

2.3.2. Historical origins of OBE

There has been different perspective on the origins of OBE. Some people claim that OBE is rooted in behavioral psychology associated with BF Skinner, others link it to mastery learning as espoused by Benjamin Bloom, others associate it with Ralph Tyler and yet others claim that it is derived from the competency based models associated with vocational education in the UK (Muhamad 1996 in Majid, 2008). However, Spady, (1994) noted that concept of OBE dates back 500 years to the craft and guilds of the Middle Ages. This review will only discuss the link with mastery learning and competency based education.

To begin with, studies have linked OBE to Masterly learning. Mastery learning was initiated by Benjamin Bloom and was based on the premise that all learners can master desired outcomes if educators adapt the time and instructional parameter in which learning takes place. According to Malan (2000) mastery learning aims at enabling all learners to master the desired outcome.

It emphasises on individualised assistance and offering of appropriate support and learning environment in order for a learner to master the learning outcomes. He further adds that, mastery learning stresses the need to use different media and materials to create an enriching learning context. All these aspects in mastery learning are reflected in the main tenets of OBE. For instance, OBE emphasizes on actual learning acquisition, flexibility of time frame, variety of teaching methods, and provision of individual learner attention.

Apart from masterly learning, other scholars observed that OBE has some links with the underlying concepts of competency based education. According to Soudien & Baxen (1997), the birth of competency-based education was as a result of the changing job market in the United States in the 1960s. They point out that people were questioning whether education was preparing young people adequately for their future life roles. Competency based education is premised on the integration of outcome goals, instructional experiences, and assessment devices (Soudien & Baxen, 1997).

Reed, Bergmann, and Olson (1998) observe that OBE and competency based education (CBE) are similar in both structure and approach. Reed et al (1998) point out that “the underlying assumption of OBE and CBE is that there are certain identifiable, measurable skills, and concepts within the subjects that students must learn in order to master them” (p.236).

According to Van der Horst and McDonald (1997) cited in Malan (2000) there are six critical components of CBE which share with the core characteristics of OBE and these are:

Explicit learning outcomes with respect to required skills and concomitant proficiency (standards for assessment);

a flexible time frame to master these skills ;

a variety of instructional activities to facilitate learning;

criterion referenced testing of the required outcomes;

and adaptable programs to ensure learner guidance

2.3.3. Principles of OBE

Proponents of OBE identify four core principles that act as a basis for OBE. Spady (2007), states that these principles are guiding posts for determining outcome-based practices in schools. These principles are clarity of focus, design down, high expectations and expanded opportunity.

To start with, clarity of focus on outcomes of significance focuses on having clear ultimate learning results (Spady, 2007). These have to be clearly stated at the beginning of each and every learning experience and keeping all instruction and assessment directly aligned and consistent with the desired result. In line with this, Killen (2000) stresses that exit outcomes should be clearly shared with the learners.

Secondly, design down from ultimate outcomes refers to designing curriculum/learning experiences systematically back from that ultimate learning outcome and ensuring that enabling skills that provide a clear pathway to that end are put in place (Spady, 2007). Killen (2000) posits that the basis of design down is to come up with significant exit outcomes and then derive from them the enabling outcomes that provide the basis for realisation of broader outcomes.

Thirdly high expectations for high level success; this involves the establishment of “high expectations” regarding every student’s ability to eventually reach those ultimate learning results in a quality way. The principle of high expectations is based on the idea that given appropriate opportunities, all learners can achieve high standards. It also reflects the idea that teachers’ expectations as well as their teaching practices influence learner’s achievement (Luke, Lingard, Ladwig, Mills, Hayes, and Gore, 1998 cited in Vandeyar and Killen, 2003).

Finally, expanded opportunities and support; this involves expanding the number, range, and kinds of opportunities students are given to learn and in the end exhibit their learning successfully. This requires that time be viewed and used as a flexible resource, in that it should not define and limit the educational process (Spady, 1994). The principle of expanded opportunity embodies the idea that all learners can accomplish something if they are given sufficient opportunity and time. In this vain, learners who do not accomplish high levels of understanding at their first attempt must be provided with further opportunities to learn to demonstrate their learning (Vandeyar and Killen, 2003).

Killen (2000) asserts that this principle emphasises that the teacher should use different methods of instruction to accommodate different students. Given that the principles of OBE are well articulated in practice, they seem to provide the panacea to woes experienced in the education sector. The principles ambitiously assure all learners to accomplish the outcomes after the learning experience, thus becoming productive citizens. However, the potential challenge for OBE in Malawi is to meet success for all, and provide individualised attention, within a prescribed time based curriculum which directly counters OBE principles.

2.3.4. Assessment in OBE

Malan (2000) points out that the ultimate purpose of assessment is to validate learning outcomes whether for diagnostic, formative and summative purposes. He further points out that OBE assess the competences of learners in totality by taking a holistic approach. It describes the competence in terms of knowledge skills and values by using a variety of assessment approaches. Assessment in OBE requires ongoing feedback between the learner and the teacher. This is so because it helps the teacher determine the progress of learners in class, and assess how much learning has taken place (Acharya, 2003).

Unlike the traditional system of grading where performance is measured relative to other students, OBE grading, reporting and promotion are assessed against external absolute objectives (Acharya, 2003).

According to Willis and Kissane (1995) norm referenced assessment in traditional education places more emphasis on students achievement than on the nature of achievement themselves. Such assessment do not indicate what or how much students have learned, in addition, they do not provide a monitoring mechanism on students performance over time (Willis and Kissane, 1995).

2.4. OBE in various contexts

This section discusses OBE as experienced in USA, Australia, and the Republic of South Africa. Later it describes the web of debate surrounding OBE reform process.

2.4.1. The context of USA

According to Reed, Bergmann, and Olson (1998) “the 1980s saw more than a dozen major commission reports focusing on the problem of US high school, claiming that it was no longer encouraging academic excellence” (p.138). It is not a surprise that significant education reforms in USA took place between 1980s to early 90s. This was following several publications about the status of education in the country including the publication titled “Nation at risk” (Murphy, 1990).

As has been alluded to, increasing economic competition on the world market catalysed curriculum reforms. The need for high skilled workforce in industries and the need for greater accountability in education investment are some factors, which prompted curriculum reforms (Killen, 2000). In addition, there was growing concern that the

education provided at that time was not adequately preparing the youth for challenges of future life roles (World Bank, 2007). In a related development, Murphy, (1990) observed that the United States faced competition with other industrialised countries in technological development, productivity and product quality, which led to the growing need for education reforms.

Following the need for curriculum reform, Manno (1994) observed that many states began to institute programs of OBE by the mid 1980s. He further stated that by 1993, twenty-five states had developed and implemented outcomes approach to education, and that eleven other states made outcomes as part of their state accreditation or assessment process. Manno (1994) observed that OBE was favoured because of its promise that it would deliver results. Similarly, MacNeir (1993) noted that OBE was favoured because of the thinking that it could bring significant changes and its perceived ability that it could provide balance between school autonomy and accountability.

Following the introduction of OBE, some schools described the implementation of OBE as yielding auspicious results despite widespread criticisms. For instance, Alhambra High School in Phoenix, Arizona, reported significant improvements in attitude and performance by both students and teachers within the first year (Briggs, 1988 cited in McNeir, 1993). In addition, after four years of OBE, the Sparta School District in Illinois achieved radical gains in grades and test scores (Brown, 1988 cited in McNeir, 1993). Other success stories of OBE implementation were noted at Pasco school district, Minnesota, Missouri, and Uta (Kearney 1994). The major indicators of success included

high achievement, higher student self-esteem, better attitude towards school, more positive cooperation between students, teachers and community and more students becoming self-directed learners (Kearney, 1994).

However, OBE was under heavy debate and criticism. This led some states to abandon OBE for standard based approach (Donnelly, 2007). Much of the opposition originated in Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, and Ohio where well organised parents gathered to express opposition against OBE (Schlafly, 1993). This is going to be addressed later under OBE debate. By investigating the experiences of teachers in the implementation of OBE this study is a contribution towards the existing literature gap regarding OBE in Malawi.

2.4.2. The context of Australia

The adoption of OBE in Australia was modeled on the American response to a particular social and political pressure in the 1960, and 70s (Anderson and Martin, 2007). According to Anderson and Martin (2007), the launch of the Sputnik in 1957 by Soviet Union marked the start for a significant curriculum restructuring in USA in order to survive the global competition. Apart from this global competition which sparked the need for curriculum reform, Killen (2000) adds that the concept of accountability led to the introduction of OBE in Australia.

The prologue of outcome-based approach to education in Australia drew its roots from 1988. This is when there were calls by government officials for education to articulate competencies that students could demonstrate after finishing school (Berlach and O'Neill, 2008). This was influenced by the global competition which needed a country to develop more productive, literate, and intelligent workforce. Indeed the 1993 national statement and profile in each of the learning area was formulated by the Australian Education Council (AEC), these focused on outcomes thus the link with OBE (AEC, 1993).

However, just as the trend in USA, OBE met significant resistance in Australia. Berlach and McNaught (2007) reported that teachers mobilised an anti-OBE website known as People lobbying against the teaching of outcomes (PLATO) and resorted to print media to express their opposition. This was joined by some University Professors who questioned the concept of OBE as an adequate design device. Despite this opposition, the state Minister for Education and Training, the Curriculum Council, and Department of Education and Training in Western Australia maintained their stand on OBE and affirmed that all was well (Berlach and McNaught, 2007).

The reactions of teachers to OBE in Australia indicate that teachers are critical agents in implementation of education policies, thus their reactions deserve more attention by policy makers. By focusing on teacher experience in the implementation of OBE in Malawi, this study serves to provide the forum for teacher's voices for policy makers to listen from.

2.4.3. The context of the Republic of South Africa

Apart from USA and Australia, the wave of OBE reform extended to the Republic of South Africa. In the sub-Saharan region the Republic of South Africa is the only known country which has implemented OBE at a large scale. Other countries in Africa as Tabulawa (1998) observed, only made the pedagogical reforms from teacher-centred to learner-centred.

The Republic of South Africa undertook several educational reforms since its first democratic elections ending the era of apartheid. The reform intended to democratise education and eliminate inequalities in the post-apartheid education system. According to Jansen (1998), the first attempt was to purge the apartheid curriculum that was considered as racially offensive and an outdated curriculum.

This was followed by the introduction of continuous assessment, thereafter OBE. The comprehensive reform was the Outcome-based education in the curriculum 2005 (C2005) (Jansen, 1998). Souden and Baxen (1997) pointed out that apartheid education was aimed at achieving social separation and legitimising white supremacy. Further, the curricular was configured so that it reproduced and validated racial separation and hierarchy. The new government saw this system of education as fragmented, inequitable, racially, and culturally oppressive hence the need for change to satisfy the requirement of equity, equality, redress and social and cultural empowerment.

Curriculum 2005 was launched in South Africa on 24 March 1997 (Botha, 2002). The driving reasons for adopting OBE according to Jansen (1998) were that, outcomes would displace an emphasis on content coverage, makes explicit what learners should attend to and it directs assessment towards specified goals. Further, outcomes signal what is worth learning in a content heavy curriculum and that it acts as a measure of accountability for instance, means of evaluating quality and impact of teaching in a specific school.

Soudien and Baxen (1997) pointed out that proponent's of OBE in South Africa and worldwide favour OBE because of its capacity to meet the needs of all students regardless of their environment, ethnicity, economic status, or disabling conditions. South Africa particularly aimed at correcting the discrepancies in the education system because of apartheid policies, thereby providing high quality education to South Africans irrespective of, age, gender, race, colour, religion, ability, or language. Botha (2002) adds that OBE was chosen not only to emancipate learners and teachers from content-based mode of operation but as a response to international trends in educational development.

Just as other countries, OBE in South Africa was characterized by intense debate mostly centering on the implementation of the reform. Surprisingly, Spady an architect of OBE who was engaged as a consultant in the development of OBE in South Africa distanced himself from the type of OBE as practiced by South Africa. Spady urged South Africa to stop referring to their education to OBE in any way because the reform did not reflect the principles of OBE (Spady, 2007). Spady (2007) argued that curriculum 2005 remained time based and examination oriented.

Spady further argued that, the twelve critical outcomes and sixty six specific outcomes in curriculum2005 were not written in outcomes language. Spady attributed this to limited understanding of the OBE concept by curriculum developers. Unlike South Africa, Malawi adopted OBE under different socio-political context. In Malawi OBE has been introduced ten years after democratisation amidst growing deterioration of standards of education. The introduction of OBE therefore, aimed at addressing the declining standards of education. Thus this study serves to illuminate the contextual factors under which OBE is being implemented in Malawi. The following sections provide major issues surrounding OBE debate.

2.5. Debate Surrounding OBE

The journey towards the introduction of OBE in various education institutions caused intensive debate. Various studies reveal two major issues propelling the debate. These issues relate to the philosophical underpinning of OBE and implementation problems. This section discusses the debate with reference to some countries, which implemented the reform.

2.5.1. Problems on philosophical underpinning of OBE

According to Willis and Kissane (1995), the rejection of OBE to teach subject areas separately attracted widespread criticism. Willis and Kissane (1995) cites Spady who contend that in OBE teaching must not be restricted to subjects but rather subjects must be learned in ways that link with real life problems, issue and challenges.

However, critics argue that such would lead to emotional exercises and reduction in academic content. In line with this, some critics contend that in-depth knowledge is essential for problem solving which would be difficult to attain by using an interdisciplinary approach under transformative OBE (Willis and Kissane, 1995).

In USA, MacNeir, (1993) reported that a major contention is on OBE's emphasis on broader outcomes than specific subject content leaving educators with difficulties in deciding what content to leave out in the curriculum. Consequently, parents raised concerns that OBE resulted into loss of basic skills such as mathematics and literacy (MacNeir, 1993). However, Killen (undated) argues that key competencies such as “collect”, “analyse”, “organize” and “critically evaluate information” are likely to be achieved from multidisciplinary perspective than single subject such as history or physics. On concerns of lowering academic standards, Baron and Floyd (1996) contend that in essence OBE intends to raise academic standards for all learners by creating conditions and learning experiences that enable them realize their potential. They add that learners are graded on how well they perform in their learning area rather than how much time they accumulate.

Another contentious issue has been the emphasis of OBE that same outcomes should apply to all students (Willis and Kissane, 1995). This is in relation to the principle that all students can achieve a common set of outcome if given sufficient time and support. However, some contend that not all students can achieve high-level outcomes; they argue that in the end this would lead to lowering expectation hence poor outcome for students

who are fast achievers. In relation to this, a report by Evans and King cited in Furman (1995) who carried out a study in Minnesota found out that according to educators, OBE enhances students learning for the 'average and unmotivated learners' while creating some disadvantages to high achieving students.

Other critics argued that outcomes set at higher level of expectation are unfair to those who have been least served by the school because of disparities in the education received from different schools. In reaction to this, proponents of OBE argue that differential outcomes encourage differential expectation and streaming which together perpetuate inequalities (Wiggin, 1991 cited in Willis and Kissane 1995). They further contest that they do not claim that all students are alike. They contend that all students have the right to engage in a curriculum, which offers high intellectual tasks, and that all should be expected to produce high quality work (Willis and Kissane, 1995). They add that the principle of high expectations for all would be compromised if other students were provided with low outcome. Further, the proponents also assert that same outcomes for all would ensure that schools are accountable for ensuring that conditions necessary for success exist in all schools.

Related to this, proponents of OBE posit that time-based curriculum structure inevitably results in poor achievement by a significant proportion of students. They argue that students who develop ideas very fast are at an advantage of significant learning than students who develop their ideas slowly. Thus time based education inherently puts fast learners at an advantage than slow ones (Spady, 2007). In this case, the principle of

expanded opportunities ensures that all students benefit from instruction regardless of their capability. Further, Spady (1994) argues that calendar based learning promotes teaching that emphasises on curriculum coverage over students mastery. However, closely looking at curriculum documents of the Malawi OBE reveals that the curriculum is timed in terms of coverage in a term and the year. This can likely create tensions in trying to reconcile the two conflicting philosophies that have been merged with OBE.

Furthermore, the principle that all learners can succeed and emphasis on criterion referenced testing as apposed to norm referenced testing attracted heavy criticism. Norm reference assessment focuses on comparing student's achievement while criterion referenced assessment asses a learner against set criteria in order to determine whether learning outcomes are achieved or not (Willis and Kissane, 1995). Luksik and Hoffecker, (1995) argued that this removed the concept of competition which does not represent the competitive environment of the capitalistic world. In support of that, Berlarch and MacNaught (2007) claimed that insufficient competition resulted into 'dumbing down' of education standards in Australia.

Similar concerns were expressed in a study of teacher reaction of OBE in music education in South African primary school by Dawn (2002) who reported that teachers perceived that OBE is a threat to the traditional values of hard work in a competitive world. In addition, Venter (2000) cited in Donnelly (2007) argued that the concept that all students can succeed removes the concept of failure hence weakening the idea for striving for success.

To continue, Luitel (2002) contend that by specifying outcomes, OBE develops a tendency that teaching is structured, less creative, and robotic. McKernam (1993) cited in McNeir, (1993) echoed similar sentiments that predetermined outcomes are opposed to the very nature of education, which he considers explorative, unpredictable, and valuable for its own sake. Interestingly, this criticism has also been levelled against objective based curriculum. In defending specification of outcomes, Killen (undated) argued that the goal of having all students succeed implies that teachers must be innovative and creative in order to develop ways of helping the children achieve the goals. He further stressed that it is difficult to justify why teachers are engaged in particular activity if learning outcomes are not specified.

In USA specifically, OBE faced resistance particularly from religious groups who claimed that OBE focused more on social reforms than academic achievement (Killen, 2000). According to Schlafly (1993), parents gathered in Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, and Ohio opposing the introduction of OBE. The following were some of the concerns raised during the gathering:

1. OBE was packaged in a deceptive language in that parents could not understand its core elements that would make them understand its method, content and how exactly it differed with traditional schooling.
2. They claimed that OBE was imposed without any empirical research evidence of its success.

3. They likened OBE with mastery learning, which shared essential elements. They therefore deemed OBE to fail because mastery learning failed as it was experimented in Chicago in 1982.
4. Greater part of OBE focused on values, attitudes, opinion and relationship rather than objective information. In other words, the focus was on emotions rather than academic.
5. Parents, especially those with strong religious values disliked OBE because they feared that its liberal relativistic nature would promote children to tolerate immorality at the expense of religious values.

However, Kearney (1994) observed that several examples of OBE failures cited in the publications by fundamentalist Christian groups lacked analytical rigour and sometimes-academic integrity. Other critics argue that criticisms by Christian groups center much on potential abuses rather than actual abuses (Kearney, 1994).

2.5.2. Implementation problems

Apart from the debate underlying the philosophy of OBE, studies also indicate that OBE faced various implementation problems. In Australia, there was growing realisation that OBE approach was difficult to implement system wide. This was attributed to the fact that OBE changes needed were too radical for the whole system to accommodate (Griffin, 1998 cited in Donnelly, 2007).

Other implementation problems in Australia reported by Donnelly (2007) include; firstly excessive number of curricular outcomes especially at primary level overwhelmed teachers and promoted a checklist mentality in deciding what should be taught. Secondly, the adoption of criterion based continuous and diagnostic approach to assessment resulting into difficulties in managing and recording individual student assessment. Thirdly, OBE curriculum development was considered to be far removed from the realities of classroom and unresponsive to the needs of teachers and students hence translation to practice was difficult.

Furthermore, Berlach and MacNaught (2007) observed that from inception OBE was not well handled. They argued that the implementation lacked a plan for interpreting OBE philosophy for the immediate context and did not describe its associated changes. In addition, they pointed out that teachers complained that the professional development did not focus on how to be more effective in class but rather how to make sense of documentation involved.

Similar implementation problems were significantly noted in South Africa. According to Jansen (1998), the language of OBE is complex, confusing, and sometimes contradictory. He claimed that teachers had to come to terms with over fifty different concepts and labels and keep track of the changes in meanings and priorities afforded to these different labels over time.. For instance, to understand the concepts of ‘outcomes’ it requires understanding of competencies, unit standards, learning programs, curriculum assessment

criteria, range statement, equivalence, articulation and many more. Failure to understand OBE concept meant its compromised translation to classroom practice.

In addition, Jansen (1998) pointed out that for proper implementation of OBE there was need for highly qualified teachers who are able to handle complex issues associated with the curriculum. However, the situation in South Africa in terms of teacher qualification was far from handling the complexity of the curriculum in that teachers needed intensive training (Jansen, 1998).

Another aspect is that overwhelming majorities of teachers had no access to information on OBE or understood OBE in situations where such information was available, and that there was little support given to teachers or sometimes the support was fragmented (Jansen, 1998). Botha (2002) adds that the Chilsholm report of 2000 hinted problems of implementing OBE in South Africa which included inadequate training of teachers to teach in outcome-based manner, and lack of financial resources to train teachers efficiently and effectively. Smit (2005) adds that curriculum 2005 (C2005) just as the apartheid was imposed from the top, support was seriously lacking only emergency training, and materials were offered.

Furthermore, it was also noted that the learning area committee, which was formulating OBE in South Africa, comprised of a few experts and whites leaving out the majority of teachers. Smit (2005) adds by citing Hartshorne (1999) that teachers who are directly involved in classroom practice have been mere observers of curriculum development process driven by outside experts.

Jansen (1998) further noted that OBE multiplied administrative burden to teachers especially on continuous assessment in which teachers need to re-organise the curriculum in terms of amount of time allocated to monitoring individual student progress against outcomes, administer appropriate forms of assessments, and maintain comprehensive records. Botha (2002) adds that planning for individual instruction, remediation, and enrichment overload teachers during their activities. This is similar to criticisms levelled against OBE in Australia (Donnelly, 2007; Berlach and MacNaught, 2007)

In South Africa, the criticism against OBE resulted into a review to address the criticisms (Chisholm, 2004). However, ten years after implementation, the analysis of the results on the impact of OBE on performance indicated little improvement on pupil's performance. In a book titled, *Getting Schools Working*, Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003) cited in Chisholm, (2004) argue that studies conducted from 1998 to 2002 suggest that learners' scores were far below what was expected at all levels of the schooling system.

A number of studies in Malawi have indicated that the country is still grappling with inadequate qualified teachers in the primary school sector (MoEST, 2009; MoEST, 2008; GoM, 2001; Kaambankadzanja, 2004; Bisika, 2005; Chimombo, 2005). This problem was compounded with the introduction of free primary school education in 1994 which tremendously increased school enrolment. This raises concerns as to whether the existing teachers would be able to handle the OBE innovation considering similar challenges being faced elsewhere.

In addition, in Malawi, criterion referenced testing and continuous assessment is not consistent with the way the previous curriculum operated. Performance of learners was compared against each other. Those with better grades in relation to others have a chance of being selected to secondary school after passing national examinations prepared by the Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB). This results into more emphasis on teaching through transmission in order to cover content. The challenge is whether teachers can respond to the reform bearing in mind that national examinations still determines competitive selection to the limited places in secondary school. This makes one to question if the OBE reform is consistent with the realities on the grounds in the Malawi primary school.

Despite the debate on OBE, no agreement has emerged. Donnelly (2007) reported that some states in USA abandoned OBE to standard approach while others reported tremendous progress in OBE implementation (Briggs, 1998 cited in MacNeir, 1993). In addition, Killen (undated) observed that the concept of OBE have been adopted and

adapted by many education reformers though with no specific reference to Spady's work. In South Africa the debate in South Africa followed the review of OBE to fit with the context (Chisholm (2004).

Since no conclusive agreement has been reached on the debate on OBE curriculum it is therefore proper to decide on the system which works better considering the context. The fact that OBE is a new concept in Malawi, this study takes a step towards understanding teachers experience taking into account the social cultural milieu in Malawi. By focusing on teacher experiences in the implementation of OBE, this study unveils the opportunities and challenges in implementing OBE in a Malawian context.

2.6. OBE in Malawian context

In line with the policy requirement that the primary school curriculum be reviewed after eight years (Livuza, 2007 in MIE 2009), the Malawi government through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology adopted the OBE curriculum in 2001. However, the actual implementation began with standard 1 in January 2007, this was followed by standard 2, 5 and 6 in 2008 (MIE, 2008). The implementation of OBE covered all classes in 2009.

According to MIE (2008), Malawi has passed through five phases of curricular changes in primary school; these phases are 1961-1965, 1966-1981, 1982-1990, 1991-2006 and 2007. The recent reform (PCAR) embraced OBE (MIE, 2008). According to (MIE 2008) the previous reforms followed Ralph Taylor and Hilda Taba's objective based models.

These were characterized by teacher-centred approach to teaching in which teachers taught by transmission and pupils were passive recipients of knowledge (Mchazime, undated). In contrast, the present curriculum represents a shift from the past in which learner-centred approaches are the core element (MOE and MIE, 2007). In addition, the current OBE emphasises continuous assessment as integral to teaching and learning which was not well spelt out in the previous curricula.

According to MIE (2008), before the adoption of OBE, the 1991 curriculum was part of government commitment to fulfill EFA and the Jomtien declaration. However, the 1991 curriculum faced a number of implementation challenges. These challenges included, high teacher and pupils' absenteeism, high dropout rate, high repetition rate and low survival rate. Similar concerns were mentioned in various studies (Kaambankadzanja, 2005; Chimombo, Banda, Mchikoma, 2001; Bisika, 2005, Chimombo, 2005). Other studies indicated that, in relation to other countries, Malawi ranked low on a number of education quality indicators. For instance, the 1995 SACMEQ study in particular, revealed poor performance of standard six students in that out of 91% enrolled at ages 6-14, only 31% survived to grade 5 and sadly, only 7% achieved the minimum mastery of reading in Malawi.

In addition, further studies of SACMEQ, revealed that the introduction of free primary education brought untold misery in the Malawi's education system. The primary school enrolment swelled from 1.9 million to 3.2 million. This had put under immense pressure the already minimal resources, thereby promoting quantity at the expense of quality.

The study revealed that the reading abilities of standard six children were far from being adored as the results could mean that by standard six children were still functionally illiterate (Milner, Chimombo, Banda and Mchikoma, 2001).

This led to the development of Malawi Primary Schools Curriculum and Assessment Framework which eventually led to the introduction of OBE aspects in the reform with the view that quality of education would improve. Nevertheless, there seems to be inadequate information on how some of the problems which crippled the previous curriculum have been addressed. This picture creates worries that the same challenges faced in the previous curriculum may be replicated in the current OBE curriculum. It is within this realm that this study intended to investigate the implementation of OBE in primary school. Since teachers are critical in the curriculum implementation in that they translate policy into practice in classroom, investigating their experiences during implementation provides vital information about the reform process and its possible impact.

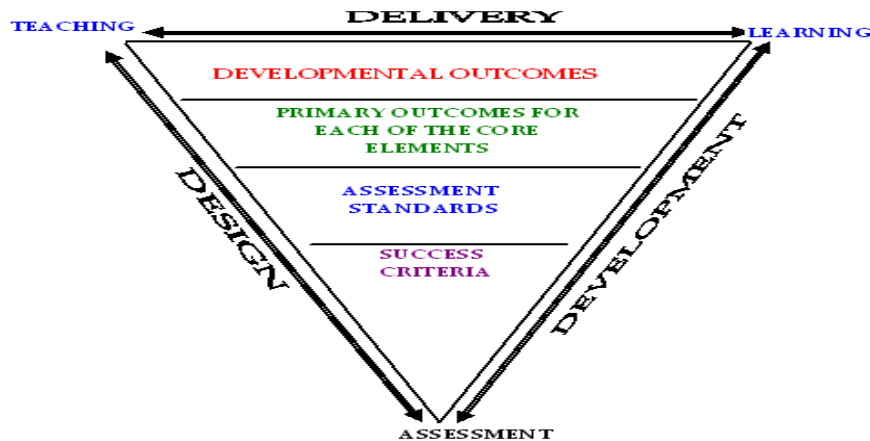
2.6.1. Curriculum structure of Malawi's OBE

Malawi's OBE curriculum focuses on learner achievement. In order to achieve learning, learners are introduced to new knowledge by capitalising on learner's prior knowledge in their context so that they can develop new understanding as learning takes place. The curriculum structure of Malawi's OBE is comprised; developmental outcomes, primary

outcomes for each of the core elements, assessment standards for each and every class, and success criteria.

The curriculum structure of OBE in Malawi is depicted in the diagram below.

Figure 1 of curriculum structure of Malawi's OBE



Source: MoEST & MIE (2004)

1. Developmental outcomes are what the learner is expected to achieve at the end of the primary cycle both in and outside school. These outcomes have been derived from Malawi's constitution, vision 2020, PRSP, PIF, other educational documents including global agreements as well as from PCAR assessment reports.

PCAR identifies eight developmental goals and these are that learners should be able to:

Communicate competently, effectively and relevantly in a variety of contexts and in multiple languages;

Apply mathematical concepts in scientific, technological, socio, environmental, cultural and economic contexts to solve problems;

Produce product and solutions through Science and Technology in a creative way and demonstrate respect for their environment to solve problems;

Demonstrate health promoting behavior in their personal lives as well as their communities and wider environment with particular attention to prevalent diseases such as Malaria, Sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS;

Observe, interact with the natural and physical environment in order to understand and make use of their interrelationship in a responsible and appreciative manner;

Demonstrate appropriate moral, ethical and healthy behavior in accordance with the acceptable norms and values of the society;

Make use of basic knowledge and skills necessary for life-long learning, personal advancement, the development of society and the nation;

And apply an imaginative, creative mind, vocational and managerial skills in order to initiate and participate in productive manner that will serve the individual and society

2. Primary outcomes - these are derived from the developmental outcomes. These outcomes are what learners should know, be able to do and desirable attitudes that they should display at the end of primary cycle for each learning area.
3. Learning area and core elements - these are organised body of knowledge, skills values and desirable attitudes that serve as foundation for learning.
4. Assessment standards – these are derived from primary outcomes and they indicate the agreed basic level of knowledge concepts, skills and desirable attitudes the learner must demonstrate or display during and at the end of each class

5. Success criteria – these are related to assessment standards. They are examples of how learners will demonstrate achievement of the specific knowledge, content skills and desirable attitudes of each assessment standards (Source MoEST and MIE, 2004)

2.6.2. The role of assessment in Malawi's OBE

Assessment in outcome-based curriculum is the gathering of valid and reliable information/evidence of pupils learning achievement. In Malawi, assessment is taken as a crucial element in that it is integral to the teaching and learning process. According to MOE (2004) outcome-based assessment throughout the primary cycle in Malawi is comprised of two major components namely, continuous assessment and summative assessment.

Firstly, continuous assessment provide reliable information to determine what learners know, are able to do or demonstrate and what values and attitudes they display against clearly defined criteria for each learning area. Some of the benefits of continuous assessment are:

- Provides feedback on what learners have achieved and so builds up a record of each learner's progress against the primary outcomes for each learning area;
- Helps teachers to identify a learner's strengths and weaknesses so that they can help learners to learn and improve through remediation or enrichment support
- Involves learners in assessing their own performances and setting their own goals for improvement;

and provides teachers with feedback about the methods and assessment techniques they use for teaching so that they can make decisions to improve their teaching.

Secondly, summative evaluation is used to determine learners progress at predefined times. Tests and examinations are used as summative evaluation. The Malawi primary curriculum and assessment framework suggests the use of three main modes of assessment in OBE, and these are, Baseline, diagnostic, and formative.

- Baseline assessment is the assessment of learners' prior learning. The teacher establishes what the learner already knows. The teacher uses this information to plan learning activities that would ensure that learners achieve expected learning outcomes.
- Diagnostic assessment is the type of assessment which helps teachers to discover barriers that learners encounter in the learning process. This information assists the teacher to plan for remediation and possible support for the learner to achieve the expected outcomes. In the case of gifted children, diagnostic assessment assist teachers to provide them with further enrichment
- Formative assessment is the form of assessment which provides feedback on strengths and weaknesses of learners learning performance and the teachers teaching performance. It is a tool for teachers to improve their teaching.
- Systemic assessment is an external way of monitoring the primary education system by comparing learners' performance to national indicators of learner

achievement. This involves monitoring learner achievement at regular points using nationally defined measuring tools. This information can then be used to evaluate the curriculum and /or the teaching and learning in order to make improvements at the national level (source MoEST and MIE, 2004)

2.6.3. Other notable aspects in PCAR's outcome-based education

Kaambankadzanja (2005) points out that some concepts of OBE such as learner-centred approaches, and continuous assessment are familiar practices. However, OBE as a whole is new to Malawi. According to Kaambankadzanja (2005), Malawi has not adopted systematic standards of OBE as advocated by its proponents or as practiced in the US and Australia because of different contexts. It has been adapted by mixing aspects of the previous curriculum and that of OBE. According to Kaambankadzanja (2005) Malawi's OBE has prescribed textbooks, has prescribed timetable and subject structures and teachers use the syllabus as a guide.

The description of OBE in Malawian context bears the characteristics of traditional based OBE. As noted, traditional based OBE has prescribed content just as prescribed textbooks and syllabus in Malawi. In addition, it has timetables, this shows that learning is time-based. Though transformational OBE is highly valued by proponents of OBE, the PCAR has managed to embrace, the shift to learner-centred approaches, the use of outcomes, the adoption of criterion referenced test and continuous assessment.

However, by mixing certain aspects of the previous curriculum with OBE creates potential room for problems. Teachers are likely to be faced with the dilemma of reconciling the conflicting paradigms in order to achieve the principles of OBE advanced in PCAR. For instance, prescribing content and timetable has an inherent potential of misleading teachers to focus on finishing the content within the given time. This can likely compromise the need for individualised attention, learner involvement, constant assessment, use of various methods and instructional modalities, which are important aspects in principles of OBE. It is within this context that the study was carried out in order to investigate teacher experience and unveil the potential uncertainties and opportunities in the curriculum reform in Malawi.

2.7. Curriculum implementation

Many scholars have written on education change and how organisations respond to change. In addition, many have written on curriculum implementation, which deals with the way the intended curriculum is translated into practice. These two issues are important in the study because they deal with the way implementers respond to changes in the system and how they execute education intentions. Therefore, this literature provides an important insight to the study.

2.7.1. Curriculum implementation defined

Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) state that implementation brings into reality the anticipated change. Hawes (1979) adds that the process of implementation involves the introduction of new practices within the system and their consolidation and continuation. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) look at implementation as consisting “of the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or set of activities and structure new to the people attempting or expected to change” (P65). Hawes (1979) argues that the first task of curriculum implementation involves the changing of attitudes of policy makers, administrators, teacher trainers, supervisors, teachers, parents, and finally the learners. He adds that provision of materials and administrative means is important for effective implementation. In relation to this, Wolf, Lang, Mount, VanBellee-Prouty (1999) observe that “Planning for implementation should include a strategy for overcoming any anticipated resistance and monitoring the implementation process to quickly recognise any problem that arises” (p.38). By focusing on teacher experience, this study serves to illuminate the challenges and opportunities in the course of implementing OBE in Malawi.

2.7.2. Factors facilitating curriculum implementation

Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) point out that successful curriculum implementation results from careful planning which focuses on people, programs and processes. They add that in order to implement curriculum change, people must change their habits and views. The following are some of the factors that affect curriculum implementation.

Teachers' education

Hawes (1979) points out that the teacher is central to curriculum implementation because he or she is responsible for interpreting objectives and content of curriculum plan and manages the learning situation through which intention is transformed into actual practice. He argues that the tried and trusted way of introducing new curricular is by offering specially organised courses for teachers. Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) add that curriculum designers need to provide the necessary support in form of in-service training and staff development for their recommended curricular innovation in that the support builds self-confidence among those affected.

Supervision

Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) point out that supervision is important to the implementation of the curriculum because the supervisor provides directions, guidance, and makes sure that teachers have the skill to carry out the change. In line with this, Hall and Hord (2001) stress that monitoring the implementation of change is very essential during change process. They argue that this provides an opportunity to contact implementers of change and diagnose problems leading to possible solution.

Communication

Hawes (1979) argues that “Without information there is distrust, where distrust is rife innovation falter and fail” (p.121). He adds that “Dissemination of ideas is the first necessity to prepare people to accept change, understand what is involved and why it is worth making” (p.18). One important difficulty in curriculum implementation is communication. Head teachers, teachers and parents are supposed to be informed about

curriculum changes. In Uganda the magazine titled ‘The Teacher’ was introduced to overcome the problem of communication (Hawes, 1979). Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) add that there is need to hold open discussions on the new curricular throughout the implementation process in that these discussions allow implementers to express objections or concerns and consequently reducing opposition.

Resistance to change

Beach and Reinhartz (2000) point out that whenever change occurs; a frequent and natural response is that of resistance. Germinario and Cram (1998) cited in Smit (2005) point out that resistance is the common theme in education. Further, Chiwona (1992) contends that education is a very conservative industry. “Essentially how policy is viewed, understood and experienced, however becomes real when teachers attempt to implement the policy. “Mistakenly it is thought that policy decisions automatically result into education practice” (Smit, 2005, p.298). Hall and Hord (2001) observe that within the system, some people change immediately after an innovation has been introduced while others take time to respond to change. In a study by Smit (2005) on policy implementation, the author argued that resistance to change often occurs because teachers remain silent voices in policy formulation despite playing an important role in the education system.

Many writers have written on factors leading to resistance to change. Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) point out that inertia among people retard change in that people believe that it is easier to keep things as they are. Chiwona (1992) observes that it is difficult to change teacher’s deeply entrenched practices and attitudes. They feel that “it is more

comfortable to stay with what is known than to attempt and trigger the unknown” (Ornstein and Hunkins, 2009, p.256). Beach and Reinhartz (2000) add that habit tends to make people behave the same way they have always behaved and that changes represent a challenge to their accustomed behaviour.

OBE marks a departure from the previous curriculum which was input based with significant changing roles of both the teacher and pupil in Malawi. It is within this context that the study is important because it provides vital information on how teachers are reconciling the past and the present experiences.

Further, Ornstein and Hunkins (2009), state that teacher lack of knowledge of the latest research prevents them from accepting change. This is so because few schools have research libraries and more often teachers are always class bound thereby having little opportunities to discuss latest research with others. Related to this, Beach and Reinhartz (2000) point out that people often resist change because they do not understand all the aspects, implication or benefits of the proposed change or have misunderstanding of the proposed innovation. In addition, Chiona (1992) observes that the majority of teachers/educators tend to tread on familiar ground usually because of lack of active research by practitioners which would help them justify reform or innovation in the education system.

Thomas Harvey in Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) noted the following factors, which lead to resistance to change. Firstly, when individuals implementing change feel that they are neglected in the change process they resist because lack of ownership. This explains why teachers in South Africa resisted implementation of OBE because of the feeling that the change was just imposed on them by a few experts and whites leaving the majority of teachers (Smit, 2005).

Secondly change that is associated with an increase in workload is likely associated with resistance. The nature of OBE requires teachers to keep up to date record on learner performance. This information provides necessary feedback to inform the teaching and learning process. It is not a surprise that teachers in Australia and South Africa felt that OBE increased workload on teachers especially with the introduction of continuous assessment (Jansen, 1998, Botha, 2002, Donnelly, 2007, MacNaught, 2007)

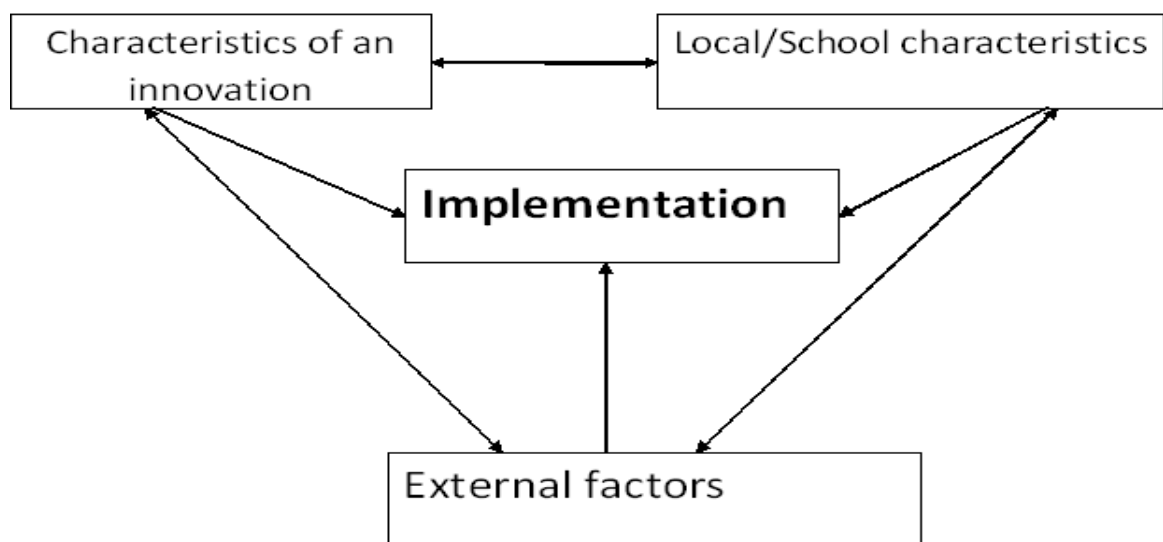
Furthermore, Chapman and Mahlck (1997) agree with Thomas Harvey cited in Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) that lack of perceived benefit leads to resistance if teachers remain unconvinced about the benefits of an innovation to them as well as to students. They argue that teachers may not implement an innovation effectively if they feel that incentives are not enough as compared to the work that is required of them. In USA, literature indicates that resistance to OBE reform worked at the expense of religious values and the feeling that it reduced education standards (Schlafly, 1993). Not much has been documented on teachers' experiences of the OBE reform in Malawi.

This study brings out such insights by focusing on both the challenges and opportunities that they experience as the result of the introduction of the OBE. Being a new innovation in the primary school sector in Malawi, literature on factors facilitating curriculum implementation serves as a guide to understand teacher experience in the implementation of the OBE.

2.8. Conceptual Framework.

The conceptual framework informing this study incorporates ideas from the work of Rogers's diffusion of innovation and Michael Fullan who have extensively written on education change including other writers such as Hall and Hord. The consolidation of concepts from these prominent scholars whose works have been widely cited provides a useful framework in understanding teacher experience in the implementation of the new curriculum in primary schools. Diagrammatically figure 2 depicts the conceptual framework

Figure 2 Conceptual framework



The conceptual framework is developed from the review of related literature consisting of three major factors which work as system. The interaction of these factors affects the effective implementation of change or an innovation and the adoption process. These factors are: characteristics of change/innovation, local/school characteristics and external factors.

To start with, on characteristics of change, there are many factors which may either speed up or slow down the adoption process and these are; *relative advantage*, this refers to the degree to which an innovation offers advantages over other innovations or present circumstance; *compatibility*, the extent to which the innovation fits or aligns with prevalent values, previous experiences or ideas, and needs of clients in the social system; *complexity*, the extent to which an innovation is considered difficult to learn and utilize (Rogers, 2003; Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991). Innovations that are perceived as having greater relative advantage, compatibility and less complex have a more rapid rate of adoption than their opposites (Rogers, 2003). For instance, resistance of OBE in USA came as a result of incompatible nature of OBE with the existing strong religious values. Schlafly (1997) reported that OBE was at variance with religious values because parents felt that OBE is very relative and liberal which would water down religious values.

Characteristics of an innovation therefore offer valuable information as to why some innovations are adopted faster than others or why they are rejected even though their perceived advantage might be clear. In this regard therefore, change agents must be aware of how individuals in the social system respond to change or an innovation so that ways should be found to prevent any disarray.

Secondly, under the local or school based characteristics sub factors such as teacher, school heads, and school ethos and school intervention play a crucial role in the change process. Hall and Hord (2001) observe that even when change is introduced, what is central is for the individual to change as well. Within the system some people will grasp the innovation and change immediately while others need time and a few will avoid making change. Therefore, in this context the characteristic of the teacher is likely to influence the adoption process. It is argued that those who are venturesome, more cosmopolite and of higher education qualification are more likely to adopt an innovation than those who are dogmatic, skeptical and those with few years of education (Rogers, 2003).

On school ethos, Hall and Hord (2001) argue that a social structure characterised by team work, good interpersonal communication among its members is likely to influence the adoption process. Research has shown that people are likely to influence each others behaviour in situations where members of the social system interact frequently (Rogers, 2003). For instance, if teachers interact freely with each other there is high likelihood to fasten the adoption process. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) add that “change involves

learning to do something new, and interaction is the primary basis for social learning” (p.77). School improvement therefore is likely to happen in a situation where teachers observe each other, such observation provide feedback. In addition, when teachers and administrators plan together, schools may greatly improve (Little 1981 cited in Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991)

In addition, school heads who are agents of change at school level play a crucial role in curriculum implementation. Hall and Hord (2001) point out that leadership is essential to long term change success. According to Rogers (2003) opinion leaders are instrumental in effecting change process. Opinion leadership is defined as “the degree to which an individual is able to influence other individual’s attitudes or overt behavior informally in a desired way with relative frequency” (Rogers, 2003, p.27). Opinion leaders act as sources of information, knowledge, and provide psychological support to teachers. In addition, they are approachable, conform to social norms, are more cosmopolite, and more innovative. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) add that the school Principal or head is central to shaping organizational conditions necessary for success. The activities include, development of shared goals, creating collaborative work structures and working climate, and outlining procedures for monitoring (Fullan, 1991). Further, actions of the Principals tend to legitimate whether change need to be taken seriously or not (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991). If heads or administrators do not engage in ongoing support, the change effort is likely to die (Hall and Hord, 2001).

Furthermore, availability of resources whether material or financial can speed up the adoption process. Most likely the development of the new curriculum requires teaching and learning materials in terms of textbooks that support the teaching and learning process. In addition, well qualified teachers are needed to effect the changes effectively. In South Africa, Jansen (1998) noted that the government did not adequately prepare for the change in that most schools remained under-resourced as a result of the apartheid era which promoted uneven distribution of resources according to races.

Intervention factors at school level has an impact on change (Hall and Hord, 2001) define intervention in the context of change process “as action or event that influences the individuals involved or expected to be involved in the process” (Hall and Hord, 2001, p.105). For instance, school based professional development provides a forum to discuss matters relating to an innovation. Another example is the discussion in staff meeting on how implementation is going and how best to improve it.

Finally, apart from local/school based factors, external factors consist of actors such as the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, MIE, DEM, PEA, and other NGO's interested in education. Basically, these actors provide material, technical or financial support. Hall and Hord (2001) posits that change is a process not an event, therefore there is need for solid strategic planning which involves the provision of adequate professional development and workshops to properly equip implementers with relevant skill to execute the program.

In addition, there is need to gather evaluation data at different stages to inform plans and further assist the implementation in subsequent years. Apart from provision of CPD's monitoring plays an essential role in the change process. An effort to contact clients is vital to diagnose possible problems leading to possible solutions.

The conceptual framework offers valuable information in understanding the experiences of teachers in the process of implementing the Malawi OBE curriculum. In the study, the framework assisted in the formulation of data collection instruments. In addition, it assisted in data analysis through comparison with what happens in practice. However, it should be noted that the framework does not provide comprehensive answers as regards to the study, therefore emerging issues outside the framework were also taken into consideration.

2.9. Chapter summary

The review of literature has revealed that most countries constantly review their curricular to be at pace with the socio-economic, political, and technological changes. In addition, the general change noted in the education sector is the departure from traditional teaching to learner-centred approaches. OBE is the education reform which is dominating in the education restructuring process globally. The major tenet of OBE is the emphasis that an individual learner demonstrates the expected learning outcomes at the end of significant learning experience.

However, OBE as a reform process has generated debate among its proponents and critics. The major debate surrounds its philosophical underpinnings and implementation process. Malawi embraced OBE in the primary school sector amidst several challenges in the education sector. The review noted that context in which an innovation occur influences the way in which teachers and other people interested in education react to any innovation.

The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology of the study. It focuses on the theoretical orientation of the study that led to the choice of an interpretive research design. It further discusses how data was generated and analysed.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology of the study. In addition, it describes the methods used to collect data. It further describes the sample and sampling procedures, ethical considerations used, and the methods that were employed to ensure trustworthiness of the study. The last part of the chapter outlines how data was analysed and the limitation of the study.

3.2. Theoretical orientation of the study

The way one views the world is determined by the paradigm one embraces. Niewenhuis (2007) defines a paradigm as a set of assumptions or beliefs about aspects of reality, it deals with the way people view the nature of reality (ontology) and how things can be known (epistemology) and assumptions about methodologies. The earliest researchers used the positivistic paradigm (Creswell, 1998). However, scholars now feel that positivism does not give adequate explanations about human experiences. Today, there is a growing popularity of qualitative paradigm in social sciences (Creswell, 1998).

Following the birth of post-positivist thought, several paradigms emerged. Some of these post-positivist paradigms are; interpretivism, constructivism, structuralism, post structuralism, post modernism and naturalistic (Wisker, 2008). These strands of paradigms are not conclusive as Punch (2009) observes that unlike quantitative research, “qualitative research is multidimensional and pluralistic with respect to paradigms” (p.115). Despite the diversity, they share certain recurrent features. Some of these features are; researcher as the main instrument and prolonged field study. The researcher aims at gaining a holistic view of the context under study, and there is multiple interpretation of data among others (Punch, 2009).

According to Wisker (2008) positivists believe that the world is describable and provable, measurable and deductive as such the aim of the research is to prove something or a point. Positivist research therefore tests hypothesis and assumptions, thus the use of quantitative methods of collecting data. However, Wisker (2008) observes that not all questions researchers ask about the world are predicable; many are to do with human interaction, perception, and interpretations which are based on constructivism.

On the one hand, those who believe that human behaviour is definable, fixable, and provable and can be described in a manner resembling rigid and unchanging facts, positivism becomes the core methodology. On the other hand, one is engaged in post

positivist methodology if he or she views the world as indefinable, interpreted as shifting in meaning based on who, when and why anyone carries out and adds the meaning.

Stringer (2004) stresses that research which provides understanding of the perspectives of the people who are involved is likely to solve the problems in classrooms or schools. For instance, there is need to understand the experiences and perspectives of students, parents, teachers, and administrators when formulating programs. This study sought to understand the experiences of teachers in the implementation of OBE curriculum. It intended to unpack their personal feelings and interpretation of the change. Thus the stories, experiences and voices of respondents were the medium through which reality was drawn hence the use of interpretive paradigm.

3.3. Research design and methodology

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) define a research design as a “flexible set of guidelines that connects theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and method of collecting empirical material” (p.28). Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) refer to research design as the researchers plan on how to proceed with the study. It locates researchers in the practical world and connects them to specific sites, persons, groups or wherever materials for interpretation of the study are available. This study was informed by the interpretive paradigm.

3.3.1. Interpretive paradigm

This study aimed at understanding the experiences of teachers in the implementation of OBE in primary schools in Malawi. Teacher's experiences are essentially attached to the meaning they make out of the new curriculum. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm made it possible to unveil teacher's experiences.

According to Punch (2009) interpretive paradigm rejects the dominance of objective reality. It views reality as socially constructed based on a continuous process of interpretation and reinterpretation. Interpretive paradigm concentrates on the meaning that people bring to situation which they use to understand the world (O'Donoghue, 2007, cited in Punch, 2009). Interpretivism therefore focuses on studying people in their natural setting. According to Denzin cited in Stringer (2004) "understanding in interpretive sense enables us to project ourselves and enter into the experience of the other, to understand what they think or feel about particular acts or events" (p.27). Thus the researcher is the main instrument in gathering data during the study. In view of this, the study used interpretive paradigm.

3.3.2. Research Methodology

Methodology is viewed as "the rationale and the philosophical assumptions underlying a particular study" (Wisker, 2008, p.67). Since the interpretive paradigm is essentially inductive in that it creates theory and contributes to meaning rather than testing theory, qualitative methodology becomes the core approach. In line with this, the study engaged

in a qualitative methodology. This is in line with the purpose of this study which sought to understand the experiences of teachers as they are implementing the newly instituted outcome- based curriculum.

The use of qualitative methodology enabled me to obtain a holistic in-depth understanding of the situation of teacher's experiences as they are implementing the OBE curriculum (Creswell 2003). In addition, the nature of the research questions, which are open ended, determined the type of the methodology. The open ended questions allowed participants to express their experiences freely without obstruction. Since qualitative research is concerned with the context in which action takes place, I carried out my study in the actual working environment of participants. This was so because of the argument that human behaviour is influenced by setting in which behaviour takes place Creswell (2003).

3.4. Sampling

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007) sampling refers to the process of selecting a portion of population under study. In qualitative methodology one of the sampling procedures is purposive. Nieuwenhuis (2007) defines purposive sampling as selecting the sample because of some defining characteristics that makes them relevant for the intended data. According to Stringer (2004), this ensures that "the diverse perspectives of people likely to affect the issue are included in the study" (p.50).

In this study, I used purposive sampling procedure. I chose purposive sampling because the procedure assisted me to gather the intended data for the study. Primary school teachers of both junior and senior classes were purposively selected as the main participants in this study. This was in an attempt to capture teacher's experiences across the primary school classes. Although initially I planned to get data from teachers teaching Social and Environmental Sciences, I decided to select any other teacher. This was so because upon reaching the field I learnt that teachers do not specialize in subjects. Teachers change the subject at any time depending on the need. The sample included those who were trained in OBE curriculum at teachers training colleges and those who experienced teacher-centred approaches before the adoption of OBE in TTCs.

There were a total of fifteen teachers who participated in the study. Initially I planned to interview sixteen teachers but at one school there were only three teachers available due to shortage of staff. In the study, only four teachers had OBE orientation in college, out of which, three were on Open and distance learning (ODL) program and one on initial primary teacher education (IPITE). That means all the twelve teachers only attended orientation seminars on OBE. However, all teachers with OBE orientation were found in the rural areas. This is so because most teachers from the current intake are deployed to rural areas.

Further, the study included two Primary education Advisors (PEA) and four Head teachers who are crucial in providing support at zonal and school levels respectively. Both the PEA's and the school Heads did not have OBE background from college but

only attended OBE orientation to familiarise themselves with the new curriculum. In order to ensure confidentiality pseudonyms were given for both the schools and names of participants. Table 1 indicates the sample size and characteristics of participants in this study.

Table 1 showing characteristics of participants

Name of the school	Teachers name	sex	qualification	Pre-service OBE training	Teaching areas	classes	Number of years teaching
Nyika	Anita	F	PT4	-	SES, ENG	4	13
Nyika	Adija	F	PT4	-	SES & ST	6 abc	11
Nyika	Abel	M	PT4	-	SES	7&8	13
Nyika	Alice	F	PT3	-	SES	4	34
Nyika	Akim head	M	PT4		SES	8	15
Vipya	Betty	F	PT3	-	SES & EA	4	16
Vipya	Bright	M	PT4	-	AG & ST	7	20
Vipya	Benson	M	PT4	-	AG & CH	6 a,b&c	16
Vipya	Bertland	F	PT2	-	MA	7	23
Vipya	Brian head	M	PT2	-	MA	8	23
Nsangu	Charles head	M	PT4	-	OR, GA, MA, AG, SES, EA	1 & 5	20
Nsangu	Clement	M	PT3	-	EN, AG, B/K, CH	8	19
Nsangu	Clive	M	PT4	ODL	SES, EA, EN, MA, LI, B/K, CH, LI(8)	3 & 8	1
Nsangu	Cliff	M	PT4	ODL	EA, LS, EN, MA(4) BK, EA, LS, EN(6)	4&6	1
Macheso	Dell	M	PT4	ODL	EN, EA, SES, ST	7	3
Macheso	Daniel						
Macheso	Davie	M	PT4	IPTE	MA, EN, SES, AG, LI, EA	6	4
Macheso	Diana head	F		-	(4) EA B/K & (5) EN & CH, (6) MA BK (8) CH	5,6&8	16
Macheso	Ditta	F	PT4	-	OR, MA, EN CH, EA TRP	1	13
Nyika & Vipya	PEA 1	F					
Nsangu & Macheso	PEA2	M	-	-	-	-	-

Key- ES- Social and Environmental Sciences

ENG- English

EA Expressive Arts

ST- Science and Technology AG- Agriculture

CH Chichewa

MA- Mathematics OR – Orientation

B/K Bible Knowledge LS- Life skills

TRP -Tikwere Radio Program

3.5. Study site

According to recent data on Rumphi District Education Plan, there are twelve zones in Rumphi district, and these are; Bolero, Bumba, Katowo, Lura, Luwuchi Mhuju, Mphompha, Mzokoto, Mwazisi, Phoka, Old Salawe and Luviri (Rumphi DEP, 2010). In addition, there are 161 and 8 public and private primary schools respectively in the district. However, for the purpose of the study I purposively selected teachers from four schools, two schools from each zone of Bumba and Lura. The schools from Bumba zone represented the urban catchment area and schools from the Lura zone represented the rural catchment area. I decided to have the rural and urban schools in order to capture different experiences from different contexts.

The Bumba zone is located in the urban area of Rumphi district. It is connected with a tarmac road which makes it more accessible to other urban centers like Mzuzu. The schools in this zone are within a walking distance to most government offices in Rumphi district, for instance the Rumphi District Education Office, Rumphi District Assembly and other government offices. Schools in this zone are not far apart. In terms of infrastructure, the buildings are modern built with permanent materials and most senior classes have desks unlike junior classes where learners sit on the floor. Although the buildings are modern, the numbers of learners are overwhelming making others learn under a tree thereby making learning difficult during rainy season and heavy winds.

The Lura zone makes up the rural area. This zone is connected by gravel road from Njakwa Bridge towards Livingstonia. Movement is very difficult especially during the rainy seasons. There is no public transport and people rely on privately owned vehicles as a form of transport. Schools within this zone are far apart more than five kilometers apart. In addition, the terrain is hilly making accessibility between schools a problem. Some buildings at the schools are modern and others are dilapidated. Just like other schools, classes with desks are standard seven and eight the rest of the classes' learners sit on the floor. The choices of these two zones therefore, enabled me to get experiences from varied contexts and compare whether common experiences cut across this variation in the implementation of OBE.

For the purpose of confidentiality and anonymity, schools in this study were given pseudonyms. Nyika and Vipya primary schools are names of the schools in the urban areas and then Nsangu and Macheso primary schools represented schools from rural area.

3.6. Piloting

Bell (1993) stresses the importance of piloting in the study. He points out that all data gathering instruments should be piloted to test the time taken to complete answering the question of the instrument, to check whether the questions are clear or not. This process ensures that the researcher collect data without difficulties. In this study, I piloted all my instruments at one school on 28th June 2010 which was not included in the main sample. I tested the instruments with several teachers to ensure clarity of the research question and

time taken to complete the interview. During piloting some of the questions elicited the same responses and others needed more elaboration and clarification. The questions which elicited the same responses were combined and the others were refined to make them clearer.

3.7. Research ethics

Ethical issues considered in this study include, gaining access to teachers, getting informed consent and assurance of confidentiality to participants.

3.7.1. Gaining access to teachers

Jansen (2007) states that obtaining permission to access participants, protecting the identity of participants, and confidentiality of the results is prerequisite to research ethics. In order to gain access to the area of study, I first got a letter of introduction from the University of Malawi, Chancellor College stating the intent of my study. The letter was duly presented to the office of Education Division Manager and District Education Manager. Both offices appended their signatures permitting me to carry out the study see appendix D1.

At school level, I presented the letter to the Head teachers. I further explained to the Head teachers the purpose of my study. Then I requested the school Heads to participate in the study, all school heads were very willing to take part. On teachers as participants, I first of all asked the Head teachers about the characteristics of teachers for instance,

qualifications, number of years serving as teachers, classes they were teaching and teachers with OBE orientation among others. It is from this list that I selected participants. Teachers selected were then consulted by the head teachers; fortunately all the teachers were willing to take part in the study.

3.7.2. Informed consent

Informed consent is a means for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide consciously whether they want to participate or not. It is one of the most important tools for ensuring commitment of the participant during research. In the research, I informed the participants involved, the purpose and the nature of the study. In addition, I requested them whether they wished to participate or not. I also requested for permission to record the information they provided and advised them that they may withdraw at any stage (Creswell, 2003). During this process all participants verbally accepted to take part in the study.

3.7.3. Confidentiality

Stringer (2004) notes that when people talk for extended period, often speak of very private matters and reveal highly problematic events or even potentially harmful information. It is therefore important to protect the anonymity of participants. During the study, I assured the participants that the information they provided would be treated with strictest confidentiality and their identities would not be revealed in any way. They were also told that the information was for academic purpose only. Further, the study used

pseudonyms for names of schools and participants including names obtained from various documents. The following were the pseudonyms for teachers; Anita, Adija, Abel, Alice, Akim, Betty, Bright, Benson, Bertland, Brian, Charles, Clement, Clive, Cliff, Dell, Daniel, Davie, Diana, Ditta, in addition to teachers, there were two Primary school method advisors namely PEA 1 and PEA2. The following were pseudonyms for the schools Nyika, Vipya, Nsangu and Macheso primary schools

3.8. Data collection

There are several data collection procedures for a qualitative study (Creswell, 2003). In this study I used several data collecting procedures for the purpose of triangulation. Stringer (2004) defines triangulation as the use of multiple and different sources, methods and perspectives to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research problem and its outcome. This helps to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being perceived (Stakes, 1994). Further, Simpson and Tuson (1995) posit that any tool for gathering data provides one picture of the social world, thus different techniques enrich understanding on what is going on. In this study I used, interview, lesson observation, and document analysis.

3.8.1. Interview

The main data collecting method used in the study was interview see appendix A1, A2, and A3 for interview guides. Nieuwenhuis (2007) defines an interview as a “two way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to collect data and

learn about ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of participants” (p.87). Tuckman (1994) argues that events cannot be understood unless one understands how these events are perceived and interpreted by people who participate in them. It is in this respect that interview helped me understand the teacher’s experiences in the implementation of the new curriculum.

I carried out a total of twenty one face to face interviews with the participants in the study. Out of twenty one participants, eight were females and thirteen were males. The teachers were selected from the infant section, junior section and senior section of primary school. Most participants in the study were PT4 teachers which is a lower teaching grade in primary school. Interviewing these participants enabled me to understand their experiences in the implementation of OBE at the same time interviews enabled me to understand the challenges and opportunities encountered. Before conducting an interview, I explained to the participants the purpose of the study and I clarified all the issues they needed clarification. Follow up interview were arranged for clarification depending on the need. This enabled me to get the correct information from participant’s point of view.

On advantages of interviews, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) states that interview, unlike other methods of data collection, allows opportunities for probing, and does not require writing skills. In addition, interview make it possible to measure what a person knows, what a person likes or dislikes and what a person thinks. Marshall and Rossman (1995) further add that interview is a useful way of getting large amounts of data.

Appendix E1 shows a sample of how interview transcript looked like. In order to reduce lengthy transcription some questions and responses were not presented verbatim. In addition, some repetitive responses and mannerisms were removed. Some words which were spoken in the local language other than English were translated to English this was duly confirmed by the participants.

By using interview, therefore, enabled me to understand how teachers experience the implementation of OBE from their own perspectives. It is from their responses that I was able to understand their perceptions and experiences of OBE. I used both open ended and semi-structured interview. Open ended interviews often take the form of conversation with the intention that the researcher explores with the participants his or her views, ideas, and attitudes about certain events or phenomena (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). This type of interview allowed participants to express themselves freely about their experiences.

According to Wisker (2008) in a semi structured interview there are a set of questions to be asked and allows space for some divergence with the interviewer, then returning to the structured interview question. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used to corroborate data from other data sources Nieuwenhuis (2007). Apart from understanding teacher's experiences the interview also focused on finding out the support provided to teachers, their challenges as well as how they deal with the challenges.

Although interview is an important data gathering technique in qualitative research, some factors confound its effectiveness. Marshall and Rossman (1995) observe that participants in an interview may be reluctant or uncomfortable to share all that the interviewer hopes to explore or may be unaware of the recurring pattern in their lives. In order to minimise the challenges associated with interview, I used other methods of collecting data for the purpose of triangulation. Methods triangulation increases the dependability and trustworthiness of data as crosschecking is done through data obtained from different sources (Creswell, 2003).

3.8.2. Observation

Observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of the participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them (Kobus 2007). This enables the researcher to gain deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon being observed and that it allows the investigators to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as participants do (Kobus, 2007). Marshall and Rossman (1995), add that through observation the researcher learns about behaviours and meanings attached to those behaviours' and it is used to discover complex interaction in natural social setting. Observation provides information which is more direct than data from any other source. It gives direct access to the events or interaction which is the focus of the research (Simpson and Tuson 1995). Patton (1990) adds that the observation method assist the researcher to get data that the respondents may be unwilling to provide during interviews.

I carried out a total of thirteen lesson observations during the study. During lesson observation I used an observation checklist see appendix B1. The main purpose of lesson observation was to capture classroom practice in relation to OBE demands. In addition, lesson observation enabled me to compare issues raised during face to face interview with actual activities done. Further, lesson observations enabled me to understand how teachers translated theory into practice and appreciate their experiences during the actual implementation process.

The lesson observation thus focused on the general classroom organisation, the role of teachers and learners and any other issue related to the study. After lesson observation, interviews were made to clarify on certain issues noted during observation. This information was then written in a form of observation summary (see appendix E3). In this study, I used non-participant observation technique in which the observer looks at a situation from a distance (Nieuwenhuis , 2007).

Although lesson observation played a complementary role to interview, it has some shortfalls. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) point out that the presence of the observer has a substantial effect on those being observed in that there is always a problem of reactivity in observational research. Simpson and Tuson (1995) add that the method is liable to bias, which occurs either because the researcher records what he or she thought occurred than what actually did take place or because of the observer's lack of attention to momentous events. In order to reduce the weaknesses of observation, I carried out several observations so that teachers should be accustomed to my presence.

3.8.3. Document analysis

Review of documents is an unobstructive method of getting data (Marshall and Rossman 1995). Official documents such as, school records convey important and useful information that the researcher can effectively use as data (Berg, 1998). David (1992) adds that documents provide background information and understanding of issues that would not be otherwise available. Kobus (2007) observes that documents could serve to corroborate the evidence from other sources.

During the study I requested the Head teacher to provide me with documents which could provide me with any information related to implementation of the OBE, for instance visitor's books and minutes. I also requested teachers to provide me with the relevant documentation. The participants did not hesitate to provide me with the documents which were available during the period of the study.

In this study, I checked visitor's books in order to determine any form of support and frequency of visits by people and Officers outside the school. Initially I planned to review four visitors' books but only three were reviewed; this was so because one school reported to have lost a visitors book. From these documents I checked the frequency of visits by various Officers outside the school especially for the purpose of OBE implementation. In addition, the visitors books showed the type of support which the schools received from various stakeholders.

Apart from the visitor's books, I studied lesson plans, schemes and records of work, in order to determine the extent of compliance to aspects of OBE. Schemes and records of work indicate material planned for each week and is usually planned for the whole term. The lesson plan gives a detailed account of classroom events and activities that teachers are expected to cover within a lesson. These two documents outline the activity in line with the curriculum needs to be translated into a series of classroom activities. Studying these documents was important because it represented teachers intentions in translating the intended curriculum in classroom experience, thus it was compared with lesson observations. I reviewed all the lesson plans for all the participants except for one school. Teachers at this school had not written anything despite the fact that they are expected to write lesson plans. The way data was collected for this study is summarised in table 2

Table 2. Data collection Instruments matrix

Research questions	Data source/method	Procedure
What do teachers in Malawi know about outcomes based education?	Interview	Researcher conducted face to face interviews with key participants.
How has the OBE curriculum in OBE affected the teaching and learning process?	- Interview - Lesson observation - Documents. i.e lesson plan, schemes and records of work,	- Researcher conducted face to face interview - Comparison of teaching methods from schemes and records of work/ lesson plan before OBE was implemented and current records. - Observe if teaching methods are in tandem with OBE principles
What are the challenges that teachers face in implementing the Outcome-Based education?	- Interview - Lesson plan - Schemes and records of work	- Researcher conduct face to face interview - Evaluation on schemes and record of work including lesson plans
What kind of institutional support do teachers get from Ministry of Education, School Heads and primary Education advisors on OBE implementation?	- Interview - Visitors book	- Analyze visits made to the school and check if they link with the provision of support - Face to face interview

3.9. Trustworthiness of the study

While those embracing positivist paradigm are concerned with issues of validity and reliability, those employing qualitative research are concerned with trustworthiness as an expression of research's rigour. According to Gibbs, (2007) in Creswell (2009) qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of findings by using certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects" (p.190)

According to Stringer (2004) prolonged engagement in the field enables the researcher to establish relationship of trust with participants and therefore gain greater access to insider knowledge rather than often superficial or purposeful information given by strangers. Creswell (2009) argue that "the more experience that a researcher has with the participants in their actual setting, the more accurate or valid will be the findings" (p.192). In this study, I stayed long in the field so that the participants get used to my presence, thereby enabling them to behave normally. In addition, after collecting data I remained at school interacting with teachers for them to familiarise with me. For the two schools in the urban area I did not have problems in collecting data since most teachers knew me. I started collecting data from 30th June 2010 to 29th October 2010. In addition, I carried out observation several times in order to increase the degree of credibility and trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998 cited in Maree, 2007).

Several authors have indicated that qualitative research is prone to researcher's bias (Creswell, 2003: Stringer, 2004: Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). However, in order to get rid

of the biasness and enhance credibility and trustworthiness participants were given a chance to check the raw data and interpretations in order to ensure that that the research adequately represent the perspective and experience of participants (Kobus, 2007).

During the study any matter participant felt that it was misrepresented was immediately corrected. This also provided an opportunity to clarify some of the issues obtained from previous contacts. This was done by providing the participants with the transcribed data and through follow up interviews. In situations where transcribed data were not ready, the participants were allowed to listen to the recorded interview to check whether there was any form of misrepresentation of facts. This process went on smoothly in that, in all the interviews, participants agreed to what they said. In the process of listening to the recorded interview some teachers added some more points and highlighted areas of emphasis in the interview.

3.10. Data management

Interview yield a lot of raw data in the form of a pile of audio materials and detailed notes (Punch, 2009), therefore, it is imperative to keep this data in manageable form. Operations that ensure systematic and coherent process of collecting data, storage and retrieval constitute data management (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Among other reasons, data management ensures high quality accessible data, and retention of and associated analysis after the study. Supporting data management activity, Wolf 1992 in (Punch, 2009) stresses that storage and retrieval of data is the heart of data management in that without clear working scheme data can be miscoded, mislabeled, mislinked and mislaid.

In this study, data from interview were transcribed verbatim, typed using word processor and saved in the computer and the other two flash disks and two CDs for back up. In addition, a hard copy was produced for safe keeping. Further, I produced contact summary form which provided a summary of core issues generated from any form of contact with the participants. Apart from the contact summary form, I also had a document summary form which summarized issues noted in the documents that I accessed (see appendix C1, and C 2).

3.11. Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the process of making sense out of text and image data (Creswell, 2009). Data analysis began immediately after data collection. Creswell (2003) stresses that in qualitative studies data analysis begins immediately after data is collected and is an ongoing process. This ensures that the activity is focused and prevents a researcher from being overwhelmed with voluminous data collected.

The analysis of face to face interview started by first transcribing data collected from participants. This was then typed and printed. I listened to the audio material at the same time following the transcribed data in order to have a rich representation of transcribed data. Later on, I started coding the data using in vitro codes (words introduced by myself) but reflecting participant's point of view. Apart from in vitro codes, I used in vivo codes (exact words spoken by the participants). Later on, the coded data was critically analysed to find out if they had some differences and similarities.

The aim behind this was to bring together larger data into broader category. Those sharing similar characteristics were assigned a broad category. Strauss and Corbin (1998) posit that broader categories have the power to explain and predict phenomenon. Apart from this, categorising data made it more manageable and easy to interpret.

The result of this intensive coding resulted into generation of twenty two codes. Table 3 shows summaries of all categories.

Table 3 Summaries of all categories

Category
Teaching methods
Concept of OBE
Ignoring language policy
Class size
Resistance
Leadership support
colleague interaction /teamwork
Inadequate materials
Training
Class management
Learner factor
Understaffing
Knowledge gaps
Supervision
External support
Top down approach
Incentives
Networking
Assessment
High workload
Understaffing
Content of material

The activity of data analysis as explained above with the guidance of the conceptual framework yielded three major categories namely Local/ school based characteristics, characteristics of an innovation and external factors.

The major categories and sub categories are presented in table 4

Table 4 broad categories and subcategories

Category	Sub-category
Local/school based characteristics	Limited knowledge on OBE
	Teachers knowledge gap
	Learner inability to read and write and absenteeism
	Teacher shortage
	School culture and/management
Characteristics of an innovation	Increased assessment
	OBE's influence of teaching and learning process
	Teaching and learning materials constraints
	PCARs unresponsiveness to language policy
	Content of learning materials versus age appropriateness
External factors	Inadequate training/ orientation
	Uncoordinated/inconsistent support
	Lack of comprehensive consultation
	Lack of teacher incentives

3.12. Limitations of the study

I anticipated a lot of data on staff meetings minutes, departmental minutes to find out what teachers are doing on OBE, unfortunately data was not available. I learnt that some of the discussions are not written down hence this represented a missed opportunity on important data needed for the study.

3.13. Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the theoretical perspective of the study, methodology, data collection methods, and ethical issues put into consideration in the study. The study aligned itself to the interpretive paradigm. The Interpretive paradigm rejects the existence of an objective reality. It views reality as socially constructed based on a continuous process of interpretation and reinterpretation.

In this chapter I argued that the interpretive paradigm was ideal for study because the study focused on teacher experiences. The chapter has explained how trustworthiness was ensured in the process of conducting the study. Finally, it has highlighted how data were managed and analysed to come up with codes and categories that were useful for making sense of the large volume of textual data collected.

In the next chapter I present the study findings and discuss them based on the major categories generated from the study. In addition, the findings are examined against previous related literature and the conceptual framework presented in chapter two.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

4.1. Chapter overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study as mentioned earlier the study sought to understand the implementation of OBE in primary school by focusing on teacher experiences in the process of implementing the new curriculum. Based on the data generated during field work, I came up with three major categories explaining the experiences of teachers in the implementation of OBE. These categories are local/school characteristics, characteristics of an innovation, and external factors. These categories explain teacher experiences embedded in the implementation process.

4.2. Local /School based characteristics

In this study four schools were selected. Two primary schools were from rural and the other two from the urban area. There were twenty one participants in the study. Out of all the participants who participated in the study, only four had OBE training in college, the rest attended short orientation/ seminars. In addition, the majority of teachers had PT4 grade which is the lowest grade in primary schools.

With the guidance of the conceptual frame work guiding the study, local/school based factor was one of the major categories generated from the study. This category comprised of four sub-categories and these are teacher's limited knowledge about OBE, teacher knowledge gap, and learner inability to read and write and learner absenteeism, teacher shortage and school culture/management. Therefore, this section deals with teachers experience based on these factors.

4.2.1. Limited knowledge about OBE

In this study, teacher understanding of OBE was very crucial in that knowledge and understanding of the concept of OBE shape teachers behaviour as implementers. The findings of this study indicate that most teachers including those with OBE orientation highlighted most salient issues of OBE such as the use of learner-centred approaches to teaching. However, thirteen out of fifteen teachers were unable to explain the concept of OBE signifying that they had little or no understanding of the concept.

Most teachers from both rural and urban schools had limited view of OBE; they viewed OBE as a change to participatory teaching approach, one of the teachers said,

Outcome-based education means that the lesson itself must not be teacher-centred, it's learner-centred in that most of the activities are done by learners not teachers. Teachers are there just to give them instructions (Bertland: face to face interview)

Another teacher said,

In OBE all the work is based on the learners and more answers are coming from learners, you only guide them what to do and the learners research the questions which you give them (Ditta: face to face interview)

Teachers were unable to explain the premises and principles of OBE beyond the fact that it is learner-centred. However, those who were trained in college managed to indicate that OBE as a reform mainly focuses on the achievement of set learning outcome during the learning experience to an individual learner. It was revealed by Anitta that their training only focused on how to conduct participatory teaching approaches, writing of records and assessment procedures. Anitta said that,

Yes, the training was just for four days, we concentrated on making these assessment items, and the making of lesson plans and schemes of work. No discussion about its historical development. (Anitta, face to face interview)

This finding is similar to Australian experience. According to Berlach and MacNaught (2007), teacher professional development in Australia did not equip teachers with adequate information on OBE theoretical perspectives but rather focused on how to make sense of documentation. This state of affairs represents a missed opportunity to teachers in order to fully understand the concept of OBE as it is central to achieving PCAR goals. Teachers were not provided with rigorous theoretical perspectives of OBE to inform practice. This gives an impression that the implementation process focused much on classroom practice rather than on theoretical understanding of the concept.

In other words, the training and orientation lacked balance between theoretical perspectives of OBE and practice. As a result some teachers did not appreciate the importance of certain aspects which are important in the implementation of OBE. It is not a surprise that some teachers saw no problem in providing false information in order to impress the supervisors. During face to face interview Abel indicated that they cheat in writing records to impress their supervisors. This is discussed in the preceding section on assessment.

4.2.2. Teacher knowledge gap

Under this sub-category, knowledge gap played a critical role in teacher experience. Unlike in secondary schools, teachers in primary school are not specialised to teach specific subjects. Every teacher is expected to teach any subject. The study found out that teachers had knowledge gaps in certain learning areas. They reported that they do not understand certain concepts in some subjects, consequently, such concepts are not taught.

One of the learning areas which teachers complained most is Expressive Arts, as Alice said, “...like *Expressive Arts* of course because it’s a new subject, we have been teaching *Expressive Arts* but not as we are teaching today, it is complicated to me, it is hard.”

Others complained on some concepts in Expressive Arts, as Davie said, *“So it seems in some of the learning areas we lack knowledge. For instance, music in expressive arts, I lack knowledge. It seems I don’t have knowledge about some of the concepts”*

Dell added that,

...expressive arts has combined several subjects in it there is needle craft, there is Home Economics, Music so you find that, let me take for example in music you find that there are some terms which are used that we are not very much familiar with to my side. I only have an advantage because I belong to new apostolic denomination where we do much in music but as far as I see there is a problem in that particular area because some of the terms which are there are just even strange to teachers so they don’t teach this learning areas comfortable. Also needle craft many teachers are not familiar with. There is also needlework part of it which is carpentry which many of us are not very much familiar with (Dell, face to face interview)

As noted from the above finding lack of knowledge in subject areas had a negative impact on the implementation of OBE in some subject areas. Learners are likely not to attain the expected learning outcome in their respective learning areas. This is so because teachers tend to skip some of the areas which they are not competent in. In addition, lack of competence in some areas reduces teacher confidence in delivery of the lessons. Although most teachers indicated Expressive Arts as a problem area, some subjects are not immune to this challenge. Alice and Adija indicated that the vocabulary in social and environmental studies is hard even to teachers. In the same vein, Clive indicated that generally vocabulary is hard in most of the subject areas.

4.2.3. Learner inability to read, write, and absenteeism

Most teachers in this study reported that they fail to carry out their teaching and learning process effectively due to some factors related to learners. One prominent issue is the inability of most learners to read and write, and learner absenteeism. They pointed out that this creates problems when doing reading related tasks. This problem is so outstanding in the lower classes. Teachers blamed the whole word approach to be behind learner's failure to read.

When forming the groups we look into it that there should be one or two who are able to read and write, not just putting anyhow because for example, in my class there are few who can read and who are active. Out of six learners we make sure that one knows how to read and write. In my class almost three quarters are not reading but at least one who is able can read (Betty: face to face interview)

the problem I can see is let's say in infant classes you can introduce a lesson for example what is agriculture and say discuss what are they going to discuss? The children know nothing and say discuss somehow they will just be making noise that is the problem I have seen. If the learners have got the knowledge no problem they can discuss, but if they don't have knowledge they cannot discuss but its better to teach them first and later on ask them to discuss its better (Clive: face to face interview)

... and they say learners should write what they are discussing so that one should present what they have discussed in that group but it is difficult for them, they do not know how to write so we just say discuss in your group whenever you have an answer speak loudly so that your friend can hear you not writing because they don't know how to write (Alice, face to face interview)

let me start with the standard one I once taught in standard one but I see that there is a great problem that this curriculum is not emphasizing on teaching vowels a, e, i, o, u separately so in this way, it becomes a problem for a learner to learn how to read because for a learner to learn how to read they

should know sound of those vowels. so it becomes a problem because in standard one learners are taught the whole word instead of writing a, e, i, o,u and the like so a learner who has just come from home it is very difficult to learn to say this is *ana* and tomorrow come with that a particular learner and see that thing on poster or anywhere it becomes very difficult to recall that this is *ana* which we learnt at school. (Dell, face to face interview)

Most learners reach standard four with little mastery in reading. This scenario affects the implementation of some aspects in OBE and the conduct of teacher in the process of teaching and learning. As noted from the participants the statements by Betty, Clive, Alice and Dell are an indicator that learner reading abilities affect the teaching and learning process as experienced by teachers. For the learning process in OBE to be effective especially in tasks which require reading and writing, it is important that learners know how to read and write. Clive's remarks gives a testimony that activity oriented lesson requiring reading and writing is problematic if learners do not know how to read and write, hence his preference for transmission method. The problem of reading is experienced in all the schools under study.

In order to counter the challenge on reading, teachers engage in extra reading lessons. For instance, Dell revealed that he uses old method of teaching reading and writing to standard four learners. In this method learners are first taught how to pronounce and identify vowels and consonants separately, then later on, they combine these vowels and consonants to make up words see appendix F1. This state of affairs acts as an additional barrier to teachers in trying to change their practice as a result of the OBE reform.

The other issue that came out very clearly is that learners tend to be absent from classes, during test and when teachers arrange for remedial lessons. On one hand, in the rural schools this was attributed to long distances learners had to travel to school. On the other hand, Akim attributed the problem of absenteeism in urban areas due to little commitment by parents towards their children's education. Akim said that parents send their children to sell items in the market during afternoon hours when remedial lesson are conducted. Akim's statement is a testimony that apart from school based factors, social economic status of family households have a bearing on the school activities. Other reasons given by teachers in the urban areas were that learners of today are generally lazy.

According to previous studies, inability to read is not a new phenomenon in primary school level (Milner, Chimombo, Banda and Mchikoma, 2001). This was there before the implementation of OBE. Based on this study, it is noted that inability to read remains a problem in primary school. Such a scenario likely slows down learner participation as it is required that learners interact with learning materials as well. In addition, this gives extra work to a teacher as they try to carry out reading lessons. The fact that learners are inactive due to the problem of reading, teachers remain the powerful sources of information as they dominate in classroom activities. This action runs counter to the requirements of OBE, at the same time prevents teachers from adjusting to the new concept of OBE.

The challenge of teaching reading and writing using whole word approach as identified by teachers may be two-fold to explain. Either the use of whole word approach is inherently problematic in Malawian context or may represent a departure from teacher's prior experience. On one hand, if it is problematic in Malawian context, then it explains why teachers detest it. On the other hand, if it is against teachers established beliefs, then it can be explained as a form of resistance to the new approach. What is critical in this debate is learner's inability to read and write has a bearing in the teaching and learning process thus poses a great challenge to teacher in implementing OBE. If participatory learning in reading related tasks has to be effective learners have to be able to interact with the text, fellow learners and teachers, however, inability to read and write frustrates this effort.

4.2.4. Teacher shortage

In this study, although most participants in all the schools mentioned teacher shortage as a challenge, there were some differences based on geographical location. Teachers complained that understaffing affected the teaching and learning process considering an increase in workload. According to teachers, this resulted into constant stress. According findings of the study, teacher shortage is very prominent in the schools from the rural zone unlike schools from the zone in the urban area. Based on learning area records, it is noted that teachers in the rural area teach more than five learning areas than their urban counterparts, see table 1 showing the characteristics of the participants and their teaching subjects.

According to recent data on pupil teacher ratio, schools which are in urban zone, the pupil teacher ratio is 24:1 whereas in the rural is 51:1 (Rumphi DEP 2010). According to Rumphi DEP (2010) both enrolment and staffing are high in Bumba zone (in which schools Nyika and Vipya primary schools are located) because it is an urban centre where some services provided make life attractive for teachers. As evidence that teachers are many in schools Nyika and Vipya as reflected in the pupil to teacher ratio of 24:1, Alice said when asked about effectiveness of supervision that the supervisors come once a term but these supervisors are unable to observe the entire lessons because teachers are many. In addition, to the comment made by Alice, the teaching load for teachers shown on table1 in the rural area gives an impression that they are understaffed than their urban counterparts.

Although the pupil teacher ratios of 51:1 and 24:1 in the rural and urban area respectively seem to be favourable, on one hand teachers in the rural areas have to teach many learning areas thereby increasing their workload. On the other hand, teachers in the urban area struggle with large class size. According to Rumphi DEP (2010) the average pupil-classroom ratio for Bumba zone in the urban area is 97:1 whereas the average of pupil classroom ratio for Lura zone is 68:1. From the classroom observation in this study the average number of learners for Nsangu School in the rural zone was found to be thirty, signifying that class size is not a major challenge.

On one hand, in urban areas, large class size has been the major reason given by teachers for failure to carry out assessment, remedial lesson and keeping learner records up to date. During classroom observation it was very clear that teachers were struggling to facilitate the participatory teaching approach. Teachers were unable to reach all learners in their groups to provide clarifications, as a result most lessons ended even before the group members began their presentation. In other times, only a few groups would present and the lesson would end without any proper consolidation of the learner's contributions.

Apart from failure to effectively facilitate meaningful group discussion within the stipulated time, teachers tolerated chorus answers instead of individual or group presentation. This was dominantly noted at Nsangu School during classroom observation in Cliff's class and others. This type of teaching and learning process is at variance with the requirements of OBE. According to OBE the interaction of teachers and individual learners enables teachers to know whether learners have attained the outcome or not, this cannot be effectively achieved through chorus responses.

From the results above it is noted that the problem of large classes pose a greater challenge in implementing some of OBE principles. Since OBE emphasises that each and every learner must achieve the expected learning outcomes, the absence/erratic remedial lessons puts some learners at a disadvantage. This is in direct conflict with the principle of expanded opportunities and support. This principle embodies the idea that all learners can accomplish something if they are given sufficient opportunity and time. In this respect all learners who do not accomplish high levels of understanding at their first

attempt must be given further opportunities to learn and demonstrate their learning (Vandeyar and Killen, 2003). Thus the absence/erratic remedial lessons are not in tandem with the requirement of OBE as spelt out in PCAR hence a serious implementation challenge.

The introduction of free primary school education further exacerbated the problem of large class size in Malawi. In that most schools learners learn on an open space. Just like, South Africa, Malawi is facing similar problem of large class size. According to Lumadi (2008), teachers in South Africa fail to provide individual support as required by OBE curriculum because of large number of pupils ranging from 94 to 120 learners per class. Figure 3 shows the picture of part of the class at one of the schools located in urban area

Figure 3 Picture 1 showing part of standard four class at Nyika primary school showing large class size



According to Mchazime (2003) the problem of class size was foreseen during PCAR's conceptualisation process. In a feasibility study on the integration of continuous assessment (CA) in the curriculum, large class size was found to be a major obstacle

Mchazime (2003). However, no evidence is seen on how PCAR prepared for such challenges apart from NESP 2008-2017 long term plans to increase number of teachers to counter the challenges.

In this study, out of all the four schools, Nsangu School was distinct from the rest in terms of class size. During face to face interview with Clement, it was noted that the school has an average of thirty pupils per class representing the lowest class size, see figure 4 showing a picture of a full class in standard 4 at school Nsangu.



Figure 4 Picture 2 showing standard four class with low class size at Nsangu primary school

However, the major setback is severe understaffing which gives them hectic experience due to high work load assigned to them. Most teachers in the rural schools had more than six learning areas to teach as opposed to two by their urban school counterparts.

This being the case teachers felt that the workload is too much in terms of preparing schemes and records of work, lesson plans, rubric, performance registers and many other records required in the curriculum.

As noted from the study, severe understaffing is experienced in the rural areas. To address this problem the schools introduced cluster teaching, an idea initiated by the PEA. Under this system, standard eight learners of two different schools learn together.

The head teacher of Macheso primary school said

...mostly here in our zone it's the std 8, they are the ones coming together and learn, by this time they are learning together, school X is here for a week, next week our school will be there at school X and teachers (Diana, face to face interview)

Concurring with this arrangement the Head teacher of school said,

Yes we work with other schools. As of now the PEA introduced cluster teaching. Teachers from here teach somewhere and vice-versa. Due to shortage of staff so we utilize expert teachers from other schools and our school, for instance, Math may come from school Y. So if our children go there, they have an advantage of learning Mathematics (Charles: face to face interview)

Although teachers claimed that this arrangement is helpful to learners they were quick to mention that this contributed to overcrowding in classes. Teachers mentioned that overcrowding prevented them to use a variety of teaching methods, including lack of provision of individualised student support. This state of affairs further violates OBE principles.

In order to solve some of the challenges like large class size, Benson during post lesson observation interview said that other teachers assist in assessing learners. This is in an effort to provide students with individualised support as required by OBE. This was after I asked him the reason why there was another teacher in class during his lesson observation.

The presence of other teachers in lesson was also noted at school Nyika and Vipya primary schools see figure 5



Figure 5 Picture 3 showing teacher assisting each other during teaching

Other teachers pointed out that they use group work method to lessen the problem of large class size. Bertland said that in large classes, he groups the learners. It is the group leaders who guide their fellow learners. However, Bertland was quick to mention that group work is not effective in that most learners are not used to discussing in groups. Similarly, Alice indicated that group teaching is the only remedy for large classes.

On overcrowding, we just group them like that, what else can we do because we haven't done anything on overcrowding. We do group teaching, you introduce then after that when they are discussing you go to the group and discuss with that group, then next time you concentrate to other group then to other group. But there are problems because a learner on her own or on his own cannot do well (Alice: face to face interview)

Others pointed out that the solution to large class size is to split the classes into three. However, the problem is that it increases number of classes which make it impossible for one teacher to teach effectively, Abel explained this problem as follows;

For large class it's for the school to say no we cannot involve the whole learners in one class lets divide the class. Now instead of one class we divide that class into three but to finish those classes three for only one teacher it's a problem for a teacher because he or she can start full blast from the first class then second class but for the third they cannot achieve, you are tired then.

However, other teachers expressed uncertainty on class size, and hoped that the government would send more teachers. For instance Anita said *"The problem is we have large classes, so according to their methods and our learners it is very difficult for us to cop up. We complained about large classes but no possible solution was given during the training."*

Thus despite an attempt by teachers to adopt the participatory teaching approaches, large class size and shortage of staff becomes a major obstacle to the implementation of OBE. The monotonous use of group work deprived the learners of other participatory learning approaches which would be helpful to achieving the learning outcomes. For instance the OBE principle that is not achieved as a result of large class is expanded opportunities. This principle provides for the need to carry out remedial lessons for those who have not achieved the expected outcomes. In addition it emphasises the use of various teaching methods to accommodate different students. However, the environment in the schools under this study is not conducive to achieving this principle. In such an environment OBE reform appears to be meaningless.

4.2.5. School culture and management

The results of the study indicate that school culture is a definer of teacher experiences in the implementation of OBE. In the context of this study, school culture/management refers to leadership role, general interaction and support system existing at school level.

The results of the study indicate that interaction among all stakeholders is generally positive. In this study, school heads showed their commitment towards ensuring smooth implementation of OBE. Through observation, I noted information on assessment tools were pasted on the board at schools Nyika, Vipya and Macheso primary schools. Asked why that was so, the heads for the three schools pointed out that assessment is the major aspect that teachers misunderstand hence taking that initiative to act as a reminder.

Apart from that, it was reported that school heads encourage school based diagnostic supervision. This is done by the heads themselves, section heads and even teachers. The information during this form of supervision determines the need for inserts. Supporting this, Abel said:

...we not only conduct staff development activities, head teacher plan for classroom observations and asks teachers to go to class X and observe introduction or development in order to find problems then we conduct the insert we have found in different classes. (Abel, face to face interview)

Apart from leadership role, teaching colleagues played a role in shaping teacher experience during OBE implementation. During classroom observation, Benson indicated that teachers assist each other when assessing large classes, see figure 5. At another school, Diana pointed out that when a teacher is committed with other things, fellow teachers take up the subject. In the same vein Adija said *“we do assist when we have problems we call a resource person, can you do this for me, from within the school”*

However, one isolated incident was reported by Davie that there is a gulf between those who have done OBE in college and those who have not done. He claimed that once they discuss on what to do, everyone sticks to his or her views in practice. On a personal note he reported that he feels sidelined by the fellow teachers and the administration, however, he did not elaborate.

From participants responses during interview and observation it can be concluded that the support system at school level is generally conducive in the implementation of OBE in all the schools under the study. Apart from the school leaders, teachers took an active role in

supporting each other. This is in line with the conceptual framework guiding the study which highlights the importance of interpersonal relationship in curriculum implementation. According to Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), frequent and cordial relationship among implementers promotes effective implementation of change.

Further, studies have shown that innovations succeed when school leaders take an active role in the day to day activities. Fullan and Stiegelbauer, (1991), contend that leaders provide psychological support, create collaborative structures and favourable working climate. Hall and Hord (2001), add that if heads or administrators do not engage in ongoing support the change effort is likely to die.

However, an observation by Davie reveals that elements of resistance to change cannot be overlooked. Many scholars have observed that habit tends to make people behave the same way they have always behaved and that changes represent a challenge to their accustomed behaviour (Beach and Reinhartz, 2000). It is not surprising that some teachers still stick to old ways as indicated by Davie. This is in agreement with the conceptual frame work on the characteristics of an innovation. It is argued that if an innovation is not compatible with established beliefs implementers are likely to resist change (Rogers, 2003).

4.3. Characteristics of an innovation

The study identified increased assessment, OBE's influence on teaching and learning process, teaching and learning materials constraints, PCARs unresponsiveness to language policy, content of learning material versus age appropriateness as the major subcategories.

4.3.1. Increased assessment activity

Assessment is one of the key aspects in the teaching and learning process. This is so because it provides data on whether learning is taking place or not. In OBE, continuous assessment is a critical component in achieving its tenets. The study has revealed that there is a general satisfaction with the intentions of continuous assessment citing that it induces hard work at the same time making the learner busy as Alice said,

...You mean assessment record. We have a checklist, to see that the learner is participating whether in the group or class, the rubric to record the learner's performance per week, then assessment register to compile the weekly assessments together with the term assessment. I think these are helpful to the teacher and the learners because they make the learners busy. Because they say once you have an assessment test this weekend so the learner becomes active. For the teacher it's helpful to know the learners performance, it is a sort of an encouragement for learners to work hard (Alice: face to face interview)

Ditta said she is happy with assessment as it plays a crucial role in knowing whether the learning process is achieved or not, she said *"I am happy with the new curriculum because learners know their result in the very day if they are coming up or they are failing"*. Further supporting regular assessment, Benson hinted that frequent assessment assist teachers to know learners weak areas which provide data for further improvement.

on the assessment I can say that there is a daily assessment whereby there are some of the records book like checklist whereby you assess learners daily and also this new curriculum also we assess learners weekly and also we assess learners monthly and per term so I can say that you know a learner daily, weekly, monthly and also termly whereby you know that this learner is weak in this subject maybe for him or her to improve there is need for me to do this and that, so the assessment procedures its good as I have already said (Benson: face to face interview)

Even though CA has been welcomed as a positive development in OBE, the majority of teachers expressed concerns surrounding its effective implementation. Most teachers complained that the new curriculum has too many assessment tools resulting into increased work load. As a result teaching and learning process under OBE has been described as a strenuous and tiresome activity, in this regard Bright said,

Assessment procedures as of now are too much and involving. We don't have much time to relax. We are always under pressure because when the PEA comes he or she expects us to finish the whole work. For instance checking whether all records are up to date, for example a checklist, rubric, performance register lesson plans, schemes and record of work and many more. To illustrate this, let me give an example on assessment, when you have written your lesson plan you go into the classroom you teach at the end you have to asses your learners checking whether they have understood. If you have 80 learners you have to check them all within 35minutes. It's a problem, let's say I have presented my lesson, 10 minutes I have presented my lesson tell learners to be in groups to do the work. Then I get the checklist to find out whether John or Mary is doing the right thing and do the rest to other pupils in thirty five minutes that is not possible (Bright: face to face interview)

Another teacher said,

These are good but, again they are too involving, why I say so is this, there is daily checklist, its difficult for a teacher to write, teach, at the same time assess the child. I see this as a major challenge, last time we were just teaching and assessing them at the end of the week or the month but now they say daily we must assess the learners and giving continuous assessment. They also emphasise that while we are teaching we should asses the learners. In this case we fail to teacher better. Another aspect is writing

those assessments records, we have got so many assessment tools, for instance learner profile, the rubric, the performance, so it seems that so much work is given to the teacher in a few hours to be done so to a teacher it is too involving. If the ministry can lessen the work may be sometimes it can help in teaching (Diana: face to face interview)

From the responses it is noted that apart from increased assessment tools, problems of assessment is compounded by large class sizes and the frequency of administering assessment. In addition, Abel complained that there are too many calculations which are tiresome due to large class sizes, similar sentiments were echoed by Ditta who said that

rubric is too involving because to find the scores for all learners and a grade after that you add, you find the grade for the first term then another grade for the second term and the other grade for the third term and you divide it with ... it is too involving (Ditta, face to face interview)

Most teachers proposed that already made record books should be written for them to just fill in. As of now, apart from filling learner's records, teachers spend an additional time drawing lines for the records. In relation to this Davie said:

These assessment tools are difficult to use simply because they are not already prepared if at least the government prepare the assessment tools and give it to us so that we can just fill and use it, I think that would be okay, because we teachers already have a huge classes. So for us to prepare these assessment tools it is becoming difficult so many teachers don't have these assessment tools but if the government prepare and give us just to fill the information, I think that could be okay (Davie: face to face interview)

Too much assessment has a profound effect on teaching and learning process. The study revealed that teachers spend most of their time doing paper work associated with assessment like writing learner records. Other teachers resort to writing false information, guessed marks and yet others do not have up to date information on learner assessment,

see figure 6 an extract of unfinished assessment record collected on 30th November, 2010.

CHICHEWA		SEPTEMBER		OCTOBER		NOVEMBER	
names of pupils		17	18	19	20	21	22
Ro.	B.	18	18	33			
El.	C.	35	12	33			
V.	C.	24	20				
He.	CH.	30	16	36			
Is.	CH.	24	15	20			
M.	CH.	18	15				
Bl.	CH.	16	17	33			

Figure 6 an extract of unfinished assessment record book

Asked whether they are able to carry out assessment and record, most teachers honestly declared that there is a lot of cheating. The issue of cheating was reported by many participants from all the schools. Among the assessment tools which is prone to cheating is the checklist. The following were the responses from teachers from different schools:

Let me tell you the truth this curriculum sometimes we just cheat; we don't do things correctly. I can say we are not honest because we always have fears that when those people come here I will be in problems let me just do this because it is too much. (Abel: face to face interview)

In daily lessons we have checklists we do mark, on this lesson John hasn't understood so we tick if he or she hasn't understood if he was answering question very well we mark, we give a tick. For each and every learner... we have tough time, its really tough time we cheat. We mark may be half of the class and before you start a new lesson you need to finish that. It affects finishing the syllabus we don't have enough time so most of the time, topics we don't finish the topic (Adija: face to face interview)

Because it's a tiresome task whereby by assessing eighty learners the same time in the process of teaching so we just give an average mark to a learner. We say this one is John let me give him 5 let give him may be 20 (Benson: face to face interview)

False presentation of data on pupil performance is further compounded with records which are not up to date. Document analysis at Nsangu primary school showed that there were no records of pupil performance, checklist and rubric even on the previous terms records. When asked the reason the head (Charles) attributed this to lack of storage facility and provision of stationery by the education authorities. The head teacher at school said:

Since we started first term we don't have learner profile records. We don't even have last terms records. We don't have storage place for records, when we leave them in class we discover that other people pick them. We have performance registers but at the moment I have not received them in my office. They sent us performance register records books in 2008 up to day they have not sent us others. Those were better off at least we were filling although we could sometimes leave blank spaces (Charles, face to face interview)

Although there was an attempt to produce documents from other schools like Vipya, Nyika and Macheso, it was difficult for the teachers to retrieve past information of learner performance. In some situations the learners records were not up to date see figure 6.

Apart from that, teachers pointed out the pressure of work created by CA prevented them from conducting remedial lessons. Betty had this to say, *"of course we do remedial lessons at times but as I have said there is a lot of work, we fail to carry out remedial lessons or individual help"*. Adija just like other teachers had the same experience she said *"we make these remedial lessons but vey rare because in this OBE system records are just too many for us teachers, so we don't have time in class instead we fill records"*.

Furthermore, teachers complained that increased assessment and its associated record writing resulted into a shift of emphasis from teaching to concentrating on writing records. When asked whether the orientation was useful, participant Anita said:

They told us to concentrate more of course they don't reveal it but on our own thinking we see that now we are going to concentrate on assessment items. Assessment records other than teaching because we have got too much work to do (Anita, face to face interview)

According to the study, the assessment tool which was vulnerable to teacher manipulation is checklist. However, other assessments are not immune to this manipulation. MOE (2004) states very clearly that that assessment in OBE aims at gathering valid and reliable information/evidence of pupils learning achievement so as to enable teachers to provide individual attention where necessary.

However, the trend in the implementation process shows a departure from the expectations of the curriculum. If records are either not available or not up to date then that defeats the purpose of OBE because the data is supposed to inform teaching, whether to provide remedial or enrichment to learners. The nature of OBE demands that teachers should have the ability to interpret achievement data in order to develop plans or to alter instruction in order to improve learning even without external pressure. However, provision of false data is an indicator that data on learner performance is worthless.

According to the findings of the study, teachers feel that the introduction of continuous assessment and its associated assessment tools has increased their workload through increased duplicative paper work. See figure 7 showing an overall CA score for the

month of September, 2010 on assessment rubric appearing on performance register. *Assessment rubric and performance registers are two different documents; they have been merged in the figure 7 below for the purpose of explanation.*

Assessment rubric

performance register

		SEPTEMBER					
A	WEEK	1	2	3	4	CA	GRADE
		80	100	80	77	3	
1 Bonin		50	75	90	71	3	
2 Chahin							
3 Chin		100	100	100	100	4	
4 Gao		100	100	50	75	3	
5 Gao		20	100	90	70	3	
6 Kaimin		50	100	75		3	
7 Kod		100	100	100	100	4	

NAME OF THE LEARNER

Bonin

Chahin

Chin

Gao

Gao

Kaimin

Kod

SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	CA	EX	GRADE
T1	T1	T1	T1	T1	T1	T1
77						
71						
100						
75						
70						
75						

Figure 7 an assessment rubric and performance register

Duplication of records has been a common issue throughout the study. Similar experience has been noted in other countries implementing OBE. In analyzing implementation of OBE in South Africa, Jansen (1998), noted that the introduction of OBE multiplied administrative burden to teachers especially on CA teachers had to come to term with administering regular assessments, maintain learner records, plan for individual instruction and provide remediation and enrichment.

Teacher reactions and experiences in the assessment activity have a significant bearing on the implementation of OBE. By providing false data on pupil performance, curriculum reform to OBE becomes meaningless. In addition, it is very difficult to measure student's outcomes if records are not up to date. Apart from that, ineffective use of assessment tool

renders the tools meaningless in informing the teaching and learning process. Literature stress that remedial lessons are crucial in ensuring that all learners attain learning outcomes. However, absence or rare remedial lesson works to the disadvantage of some learners which is in direct conflict with the essence of OBE.

Previous studies indicate that CA is not favourable in the context of primary schools in Malawi (Kadzamira, Moleni, Kholowa Nkhoma, Zoani, Chonzi and Chigeda, 2004). The major reasons indicated in these studies include shortage of qualified teachers, lack of teaching and learning materials and large classes. However, it is unclear whether PCAR considered immediate short term remedies on the implementation of CA at such a large scale.

4.3.2. OBE's influence on Teaching and learning process

The findings of this study show that the new curriculum has a profound effect on the teaching and learning process. Almost all participants indicated that their role in teaching and learning process is to facilitate or guide the learners. In addition, participants indicated that OBE has brought in changes in that it calls for a variety of teaching methods and active learner participation. This is in contrast to the previous curriculum in which teachers spent most of their time transmitting information to learners, In support of this, Bertland said,

In the past we were just using one or two methods but these days they are so many teaching methods that you can use. The manuals, teacher's guides and even learners books clearly explain these methods. Sometimes they say let them be in groups or in pairs but in the past they couldn't say elaborate which is which. But in here they have clarified it. In the past most, common method was lecturing or teacher-centred which is just to explain alone. But

these days it is varying it can be as learners as well as the teacher or as class as a whole the most common ones are demonstration group work, pair work, and individual discussion is there, questions and answer they are also there (Bertland, face to face interview).

Similar observations were noted by Diana, Charles, Dell, and Abel among others. These teachers noted that the curriculum emphasises participatory teaching approaches at the same time offering a variety of teaching methods. Most teachers hailed participatory approach as a better method of teaching unlike teacher-centred approaches. In teacher-centred, teachers pointed out that they spend most of their time talking and transmitting information while learners are mere listeners with minimal involvement. In contrast, in participatory approaches, there is little teacher talk and more learner involvement.

Most teachers in the study indicated that participatory approaches had reduced the amount of work during teaching and that it promotes active learning to learners. Adija pointed out that there is little that they do since most of the times learners discuss in their groups; Abel added that this curriculum is good in terms of teaching methodologies; this view was supported by Bright who indicated that the curriculum has reduced teacher talk thereby making them less tired during teaching. In addition, Charles indicated that pupils learn new skills in OBE curriculum; he said *“this curriculum must continue because pupils develop new skills unlike when you are lecturing”*

Most teachers indicated that the curriculum emphasises the use of a variety of participatory approaches, however, the study noted that lessons were dominated by group work method. During interview, most teachers stated that they frequently use group method. In all the thirteen lesson observation all teachers used group work method as a means of instruction. In addition, most of the lesson plans indicated the use of group work. While this is a positive development towards achieving learner participation, the study noted that the use of group work is being overused at the expense of other participatory methodologies.

On one hand, the major reason given for the use of group work among most teachers was that group work is a panacea in dealing with large classes, Alice said,

In order to overcome overcrowding we just put them in groups, we haven't done anything on how to cope with overcrowding. We do group teaching, when we have taught this group, let's say we have introduced the lesson you leave them to discuss and attend to another group. If some groups are not attended to we go back to them next time (Alice: face to face interview)

On the other hand, other teachers attributed the absence of a variety of teaching method to time factor. Bright said that the supervisors expected him to use many teaching methods in the lesson but he felt that it was impossible to do that within a period of thirty five minutes.

Further, Brian blamed the curriculum for overemphasising group work

when you talk of most of the methodologies like demonstrations, group work , pair work, it was all along there so its just a transfer of those methodologies to the new curriculum may be this group work method is being overemphasised in the new curriculum. (Brian: face to face interview)

To show overuse of group work Abel said *“Lessons nowadays involve too much group work. The previous method it was participatory learning but we were not involving too much groups each and every lesson be in groups be in groups, this is disturbing the class”*

Apart from the challenges above, the study noted that some teachers do not have the skill in handling group work as a method of instruction. Bright conducted a lesson which was highly disorganised. In this lesson learners were assigned work to discuss on the three success criteria's. In the process of discussions he raised some issues to discuss outside the plan. During post observation interview he agreed that he introduced other things because he noted that learners were not following. However, it was evident that he did not provide enough guidance on the discussion especially inducing the learners to contribute by exploiting their prior knowledge.

Although there is an attempt to use participatory method through group work, some teachers still use transmission method. The lesson by Dell was characterized by transmission of information. He was teaching Social and Environmental Sciences on the topic of trade. This teacher started very well by using learners experience when he introduced issues of trade during the lesson. Later on, he went on explaining all the concepts of the expected outcomes of the lesson. Thereafter, he put the learners in groups to discuss the same things he had just disseminated. This was contrary to the way he

planned his lesson. The plan showed that learners were supposed to discuss in groups on the planned work before teacher involvement. During post observation interview, he claimed that since the information was new he decided to dominate in the lesson. However, he admitted that he was not creative enough to capture pupil participation and use of their prior knowledge.

Another revealing incident was noted at Nsangu primary school. I observed that most lessons were characterised by drilling. I could hear a teacher reading a statement on the board and learners followed after him several time. This did not occur in one class but several classes (Field notes, 19.09.2010).

In a related development, there is a difference in teaching among teachers of different training orientation. Davie said that most teachers who have not undergone pre-service training on OBE resort to old method of delivery. He claimed that this creates a challenge when such learners are taught by him since learners are not accustomed to participatory approaches.

It seems that we have two groups, of course are all teachers but these two groups are coming simply because we have got different background and we are the new guts, so we are the pioneers of OBE. We were trained in OBE but to narrow the gap with those who have not been trained in college is the problem. For example the way we teach and the way they teach there are differences that is why, for example now am teaching standard 6. This class std 6 last year was taken by someone who is not in our group, IPTE group so in order to make the learners to accustom what I am doing it takes time so that is the main problem. Per my observation is that still though these other teachers were oriented on OBE but still there are still sticking to the old way of teaching. (Davie: face to face interview)

Further, the study noted that the temptation to use old ways of teaching is high in most teachers. In an interview, Bright indicated that teacher-centred methods are better than participatory methods, he had this to say

If we can go back to the past, it was just straight forward. You were just telling them this is so and so. So learners were able to get the information and memorising it. Later on if you asked them questions they were able to give correct answers. But coming to the present it is rather a problem for them to find answers (Bright, face to face interview)

In the same vain, Abel indicated that he is tempted to use transmission method but the only limiting factor was fear for the inspectors, as Abel said *“so it is very difficult for us to do what we want in the fear that when our inspectors come we may have problems because we can get used just giving them the ideas”*.

The data generated through observation, documents and face to face interview show that there is an attempt by teachers to teach in learner-centred manner. However, some degree of noncompliance to teaching in learner-centred is noticeable. The reason for these might be two-fold. Either teachers resist the change as a result of unfamiliarity with the new methods or the context of implementation is not favourable for participatory teaching methodologies. In addition, the overuse of group work may signify lack of competence in handling other teaching methods by teachers thereby putting to question the effectiveness of continuous professional development. Monotonous use of group work as a teaching method therefore violate the principle of expanded opportunities which stress that teachers must use different methods to accommodate different students (Killen, 2000)

4.3.3. PCAR's unresponsiveness to language policy

The findings of this study reveal that PCARs unresponsiveness to language policy posed a major challenge to the implementation of OBE. This was one of the issues raised by teachers in the infant and junior phase of primary school (from standard 1-4). According to language policy requirement, learners from standard 1 to 4 are supposed to use the dominant local language spoken in that area as the language of instruction. However, teachers expressed disappointment that teaching and learning materials provided by the Ministry of Education do not reflect this policy. For instance, most of the teaching and learning materials are written in Chichewa and Tikwere interactive radio program is broadcasted in Chichewa. Teachers expressed concern that this state of affairs gives them an additional task to interpret the language before teaching.

Learner's books are written in Chichewa but they say learners must be taught in their mother tongue. Here in Rumphi learners speak Chitumbuka and yet their textbooks are written in Chichewabut you are teaching them in Chitumbuka. I think it is a problem they don't get it properly, they read Chichewa, you speak chitumbuka so comparing it with what you are teaching and what they are reading for them they are typical tumbuka but reading Chichewa it's a problem (Alice: face to face interview)

This curriculum mainly in teaching to learners especially the introduction of tikwere radio simplifies the work in class mainly if the learner understands Chichewa. If teacher doesn't know many words in Chichewa he or she faces more problems in explaining other words to learners so that they should listen understand (Ditta: face to face interview)

During a social and environmental sciences lesson by Daniel, the language of instruction was Chitumbuka, to the contrary, the learner's book contained Chichewa. Daniel expressed concern during post observation interview that he sometimes finds it challenging to explain or interpret some words which are written in Chichewa.

This exacerbates the already existing high workload. The inconsistency between the language of instructing and language in the instructional materials exerted unnecessary pressure on teachers. In addition, it posed a problem for teachers to measure learner outcomes since learners had difficulties in reading such materials which are inconsistent with the language of instruction. This gives a clear indication that PCAR did not prepare for this for such an event.

4.3.4. Teaching and learning material constraints

The study noted that inadequate or lack of teaching and learning materials pose a great challenge in the teaching and learning process. In terms of availability of textbook, this varies from one learning area to the other. Inadequate teaching and learning materials were very prominent in urban schools. Through classroom observation at Macheso primary school, four learners shared one book during social and environmental studies, and at Nsangu primary school almost all learner were provided with a textbook. However, at Vipya and Nyika primary schools twelve to fifteen learners shared one book. Figure 8 illustrates this.



Figure 8, Picture 4 Twelve learners sharing one book at Vipya primary school

Apart from inadequate learner's books, some teachers complained that they do not have books in their learning areas as a result they resorted to using books from the old curriculum. Adija said

For example on SES we don't have learners books even me I don't have a learners book, I only have a teachers guide. On SES completely we don't have books I use the information from the old curriculum and compare with the guide (Adija, face to face interview)

Although lack of or inadequate learning material featured highly, one teacher attributed this to lack of care for school books supplied by government. Davie had a different point of view,

If the government can be supplying books it can be good, because books can be supplied by the government but they take a long time to resupply and the care of the books itself in school is a major problem, books are not cared for at school level. The government can supply a lot of book but within a short

period of time the books are gone so I think if there can be other ways of caring for these books can be better. Or on the other hand, we should at least understand the government because our government is poor. It can't supply books each and every time so if there can be any other ways we can find so that books can be well kept then it can be better.(Davie: face to face interview)

The study noted that the sole supplier of learner's books to schools is the government through Ministry of Education Science and Technology. There are no books on the open market. As a result schools are not able to come up with replenishment policy once books wear out, or once learners lose these books. This state of affairs results into overreliance on the Ministry of Education Science and Technology. In addition, during the early stages of implementation, teachers complained that teaching and learning materials were not delivered in time. As a result, they were operating under pressure when these materials were delivered though in small quantities.

Apart from shortage of books, most teachers reported that the schools lack learner's exercise books, charts, markers cello tapes, and other teaching and learning aids. They claimed that lack of learner's exercise books prevented them from effectively writing continuous assessment. NESP document for 2008-2017, clearly stipulate that it aims at providing three exercise books per subject per child in all classes, one slate per child in standard 1-3, three pencils per child in a year for all children in standard 1-4 and three pens per child a year for all children in standard 5-8. Although this seems to be a step in the right direction, but it is an ambitious plan considering the backlog of unresolved challenges in the education sector. It is high time parents and other stakeholders took an active role in the provision of learner materials.

Shortage of teaching and learning materials as experienced by teachers prevented learners to participate actively in class. It was evident from classroom observations that pupils competed for the available few copies. The distribution of learner's books in class was characterised with noise and quarrels before settling down. The shortage/inadequate of learning materials especially in the schools found in urban areas reduced some learners to be mere spectators in the teaching and learning process. In addition, learners in most classes were sitting on the floor, thereby making them uncomfortable specially girls. In all the schools, it was only senior classes like standard seven and eight which had desks.

Furthermore, at Vipya and Nyika primary schools, most classes were having their lessons on the open ground under trees, in circumstances where trees were not enough, they were learning on an open place. It was clear from observation that teaching in such context was very problematic. More often the lessons were disturbed by strong winds and dust.

The problem of shortage of teaching and learning materials is not new to Malawi. This problem became outstanding when the Malawi government introduced free primary education in 1994 (Bisika, 2005). This problem is not unique to Malawi; other countries in the sub-Saharan region experience the same. In South Africa where OBE is implemented, shortage of teaching and learning material is mentioned as one of the major setback (Jansen, 1998). Widespread literature indicate that OBE works better in resource rich environment, however the context in which OBE is implemented in the area of study directly militates the required environment. The conceptual framework on local/school

characteristic highlight that the availability of resources whether financial and material assists to smooth implementation of the school curriculum. However, schools in this study especially those located in the urban areas implement the reform in a resource scarce environment. Teachers argued that they do not carry out regular assessment due to lack of materials. This is an indicator that Malawi did not adequately prepare for such a large scale school reform.

4.3.5. Content of learning material versus age appropriateness

The study noted that the content of the learning materials posed implementation problems. The nature of subject content generated diverse views from various participants. The main contention was whether the content is age appropriate or not. Cliff pointed out that the curriculum content is very good in that it contains secondary school stuff, for instance circulatory system. He felt that learners would not have problems when they go to secondary school, in agreement to this, Abel said,

The good part of this new curriculum is that their books are very good and if we can have a good method of teaching, indeed these learners can learn better. Even form one work is in standard five so that when they go to secondary school they cannot experience a lot of problems but the problem is the method of teaching. Pupils are able to follow the books according to the explanation of the teacher for example an English book. (Abel: face to face interview)

However, others had a different opinion; these teachers described the content as difficult, challenging, and age inappropriate.

A new curriculum is rather difficult because the languages that are in the books are difficult for learners to comprehend. This is different from the past, in which the language was simple. I even feel the language used is a bit difficult in all the classes' especially lower classes. (Clement: face to face interview)

Another teacher commenting on learning material said

On vocabulary, the problem with PCAR much of the vocabulary which have been used there is far much advanced for our learners. In all the classes, may its only standards one which is okay. In standard one there isn't much information but in these other classes vocabulary is too much. That's why I have said already that the policy makers don't consult the implementer that is the main problem. To have secondary work in primary is bad for example when a child is born first you feed it with breast milk thereafter come to porridge after porridge you start taking *nsima* (hard stuff). You cannot just give a child *nsima* so what is happening to this curriculum is like that they straight away give the child *nsima* who is just young (Davie: face to face interview)

In a related development, when asked on why cluster teaching was introduced, Dell hinted on difficulties in content which even other teachers failed to comprehend, he said that,

Well what I may say may not be exactly the reason some times but then the PEA himself was saying that he was looking at the expertise of teachers. He first of all conducted demonstration lessons teachers came and did their demonstration lessons so he was observing so upon careful observation is when he came up with the names of teacher who may assist in some of the challenges we saw in this new curriculum. I asked this why have you introduced this one so he said many teachers complained how these books are written many of the content is difficult and challenging so in order to address that problem that is why the PEA thought it wise to come up with people who can go about this comfortably. (Dell: face to face interview)

Age inappropriate materials as conceived by teachers resulted into challenges in implementing OBE. The two different perceptions that teachers have on subject content can influence the teachers in the way they handle learners. On one hand, those who feel that the content is appropriate to age of learners may have the positive attitude towards their learners in handling various tasks. They may engage the learners meaningfully a component OBE promotes. On the other hand, those who feel that the material is above

the learner's capability may advance a different approach to the teaching and learning process. Such teachers are less likely to engage learners in the discussion because of the perception that they cannot handle the material. This trend can likely reverse the trend from learner centred to the old teacher centred approaches to teaching.

Furthermore, as noted from the participants, the problem of age inappropriate material is particularly common in lower classes. The major problem cited is vocabulary. This observation might be linked to the problem of inability to read and write as noted in this study and other previous studies. This is one of the challenges which force the teachers to use the traditional ways of teaching since very few learners are active. The teacher in this case appears to be the superior source of knowledge. This state of affairs threatens the transition from objective based curriculum to outcome-based curriculum.

4.4. External factors

The provision of support to primary school teachers in order to ensure the smooth implementation of the curriculum generated a lot of issues based on teacher experiences. According to this study, the major findings under external factors included; inadequate training / orientation; uncoordinated/ inconsistent support lack of comprehensive consultation; and lack of teacher incentive.

4.4.1. Inadequate training /orientation

The findings of this study indicate that the main support is provided by the PEA in their respective Teacher Development Centres (TDCs). This support is in form of orientation

on OBE and provision of advice during and after supervision. Records from visitor's books from all the schools indicate that there is an attempt made by PEAs to visit the schools once every term. However, the frequency was high for Vipya, Nyika, and Macheso Primary schools. Though Macheso is in the rural, it benefited from the visits because the PEA's offices are at the school.

Comparatively Vipya and Nyika primary schools benefited a lot from other organisation which provided them with various teaching and learning materials. For instance, USAID, CIDA, Synod of Livingstonia, National library, MAP, including various Officers, these organisations and individuals provided material support and monitoring the implementation of OBE. The reasons behind frequent visits were attributed to accessibility since these schools are located in the urban areas where communication is easier.

On the issue of training/orientation teachers reported that it was very useful because it assisted them to understand some issues regarding OBE. Others hinted that the training assisted them in improving planning especially in writing lesson plans, assessment items, schemes and record of work and filling assessment record books.

However, most participants pointed out that training was inadequate. When asked whether the training was adequate, Bertland said *"it wasn't enough because some of the things we could do by asking, it was just very short period it as not just one week it was almost four to five days"*. Another teacher added that, *"these things need experienced*

people to teach us so we are not taught fully they just blur, blur us so we don't know which exactly (Ditta: face to face interview)

Other teachers who studied OBE in their colleges hinted that their in-service training was not enough to prepare them for OBE implementation in primary school. The major reason cited was inadequate learning and lack of in-depth content on assessment procedures.

Davie had this to say,

The training was okay, the only problem was that the government started the program without making thoroughly preparation, for example the time we were at the college we did not have enough material and most of the times lecturers were not there. Each and every month they were going out to study, which means that the government was not prepared the time they were starting the program it is this problem which rendered us not well equipped to come into the field and teach (Davie: face to face interview)

He further added that,

Even at college assessment was not comprehensively done and is a major constraint experienced by many teachers. As I told you when we were at the college the lack of information which rendered us without much knowledge to go about these things so still there is need for the government to come up and organize some training on these assessment tools for example if you can even move in schools you still find that these assessment tools is a problem to many teachers. (Davie, face to face interview)

The results of the findings above indicate that the training of teachers was not enough.

Another touching issue is an observation made by Ditta and Davie. Ditta mentioned that those who oriented them on OBE seem not to have comprehensive knowledge on OBE, likewise Davie observed that even at TTCs there seem to be lack of knowledge by staff members who frequently went out to learn more about the change. This scenario deprived the implementer's appropriate source of knowledge on OBE from experts.

In order to ensure that change infiltrates into implementers minds there is need for continuous professional development. Extensive literature stresses the importance of continuous professional development whenever change is introduced into the system. Hall and Hord (2001), stress the need for an extensive and continuous training of implementers of change. They argue that a process of change cannot be achieved through one day or two day training workshop for teachers. This is so because it takes time to change the past habit of teachers, since change to new ways represent a sense of sadness. As a result there is need for continuous support and training. In the same vein TTCs need to have appropriate teaching staff conversant with OBE in order to adequately prepare teachers for the implementation of the new curriculum.

4.4.2. Uncoordinated/ inconsistent support

Apart from inadequate training, the study noted that the training/orientation was characterised by changes of information and inconsistencies on various aspects. This brought in confusion and dilemma among teachers who were not certain on which information to follow. In support of this, Benson said,

The facilitators confused us because the first trainees were the standard one they went there they trained them how to write some of the record book and the second group was standard five and six they went there and got different information. Then we changed following the changes. Thereafter standard three and four teachers went there and they got different information again. Finally, the last group was standard eight they also came back with different information. So they confused us (Benson: face to face interview)

Similar sentiments were echoed by Abel who said that that *“for example on assessment we went twice, the first training they trained us in another way round then after four months we were called back and learnt in a different way”*

Literature on curriculum implementation greatly emphasise on carrying out rigorous in-service training and staff development (Ornsterin and Hunkins, 2009). Although this component in PCAR takes a centre stage, conflicting information renders the process a wasted effort. In addition, the changes as noted by teachers signify that the pilot phase was not rigorous enough to sort out some problems.

Related to training challenges, teachers felt that some of the PEA's were not conversant with some of the issues of the curriculum. As a result, the PEA's provided conflicting information to teachers. Just as the inconsistencies in the training, teachers were in a state of confusion in dealing with conflicting messages.

Mostly on assessment tools there was, others were saying we do this and we say let us go and ask from our (not clear) in karonga. When they come with another... so for us to follow was going to be a problem (Diana: face to face interview)

Sometimes there is a difference between individuals who sometimes come to observe us because observer A will say oh no, no on this particular area you are supposed to do ABCD while the other one will talk something contrary to the first one so I see as if there is also difference, different observers have different knowledge because one observer says okay when you are doing so,so,so you should not be doing so,s o,so, the other ones says no, no, no this is what you are supposed to do so sometimes we don't know what we are supposed to follow. (Dell: face to face interview)

In addition, Clement pointed out that he did not grasp most of the concepts especially on assessment tools due to inadequate explanations by the PEA. Clement said, *“For instance assessment tools were a problem. Most of us did not understand them due to inadequate explanations. The other reason is on infrequent orientation on tools”*

Other teachers expressed that some PEAs attitude was not encouraging in the implementation of the new innovation, Bright had this to say,

Firstly I should say there was no really tense when these people come and supervise us but I should say when they give us a report at the end it shows something that this supervisor has come here for some reason. The way they speak to us, they don't talk to us as an advisor may be as a fault finder this is what I have observed from these people. (Bright: face to face interview)

Another one added,

When they come that depends on somebody's behaviour some come with a gentle behaviour and others do agree with us when we have complained that we have some problems but others just say anything they can say.. say no its just laziness you still have to follow they don't take our complaints, not at all (Betty: face to face interview)

Dell indicated that some supervisors are harsh

It is just good; only that sometimes some of the observer are harsh some may be advising very well. If someone is an observer he or she is a boss so a boss can not always be lenient. Many are harsh (Dell: face to face interview)

Basing on what Dell said, there is a clear indication that the relationship between PEAs in other instances is not collegial. When both PEA1 and 2 were asked about this issue, they agreed that these inconsistencies existed in schools. They pointed out that even during their orientation they realised that the first orientation was different from the second. In addition, they noted that different facilitators facilitated differently.

While Hall and Hord (2001) stresses the need for CPD and regular monitoring mechanisms, the above experiences show that supervisory activities were ill planned. From the teachers experience it is clear that the problems in the provision of supervisory support and training can be traced from the training mode of PCAR. The training model followed a cascading model in which people at different levels were trained to train others. This probably explains the conflicting information during orientation and different advice provided by different PEAs. This has a negative bearing on the implementation in that, conflicting information results into lack of uniformity in translating theory to practice across the country.

4.4.3. Lack of comprehensive consultation

Although it is evident that teachers were consulted during the whole process of PCAR conceptualisation some teachers still felt that they were sidelined, Ditta said *“if it is possible they should invite teachers from primary schools because they are the very people who meet the situations and they are the very people who can make it straight”*.

In stressing this gap, Davie hinted that policy makers do not come to exchange experiences with the implementers.

Another thing is that I feel that the government on the other hand is to blame on the dwindling quality of education here in Malawi , why am I saying so is that the policy makers are on the other side and the implementers are on the other side , these two they do not interact they do not exchange experiences. I think it is good that the policy makers have to come to us and ask us how we can go about these things but they don't do

that they just make the policies of which some are good some are not good so for us to implement those policies its where there are difficulties.(Davie: face to face interview)

Clive added that those at higher level are not empathic in making certain decisions about the curriculum.

Since they are educated they say we have failed to implement. For us we do what we are told, we cannot have opposing views since they say we are not knowledgeable on these issues based on research. The other thing is that when coming up with these policies they involve secondary school teachers, those from Domasi and Chancellor College who have never been in primary school

Similarly, Ditta said *“if it is possible they should invite teachers from primary because they are the very people who meet the situations and they are the very people who can make it straight”*

From the responses above it is evident that there is a huge gulf between policy makers and implementers. Teachers still view the reform to OBE as a top down approach where views and experiences of the grassroots are not taken into consideration when developing a curriculum. Hall and Hord (2001) point out that teachers view themselves as being at the bottom and the policy makers at the top. This view creates distrust along the continuum between implementers and policy makers. As a result of this teachers feel that policies are just imposed on them. In South Africa, OBE experienced a lot of implementation challenges because teachers felt that there was no comprehensive consultation with implementers. Teachers believed that very few experts were responsible for developing it (Smit, 2005).

4.4.4. Lack of teacher incentives

The findings of this study show teacher disappointment over lack of incentive while the new curriculum has increased teaching workload. Teachers argued that the work that they are doing does not tally with the money they receive. This has an impact on the level of commitment towards implementing the curriculum. As regards to lack of incentives Benson had this to say

one the government should promote teachers and also we should receive better salaries because there is too much work and yet other countries are receiving better salaries .I started teaching in 1996 up to now am still PT 4 So implementing a thing like this one to me I see that it is just waste of time that is why to my part when I work I look at my salary first. Had it been we receive better salaries we should have what implemented some of these things very effectively (Benson: face to face interview).

Similar sentiments about lack of incentive were also expressed by Bertland and had this to say

...and two since we have got a lot of work the teachers themselves there are no token of appreciation just very low even promotions teachers have not been promoted for example they had the interview of changing to other grades but most of the teachers were left out so that was not encouraging at least they should have encouraged teacher s by promoting them. Some of the teachers we do stay on the same grade for twenty years others even to retirement, so I don't know how teachers should accept such things and we don't have any way of getting the allowances it's just the salaries and go back in class (Bertland: face to face interview).

Two , still when you are working there others things one should expect for example here they have introduced hardship allowance for us but the way they are handling it one fail to understand. In the month of July they came and they paid us but in the month of August they did not show up and there are no any explanation. (Davie: face to face interview)

The above reactions of teachers indicate that teachers are not satisfied with the incentive provided to them in relation to the work they do. Similar reactions are noted in other

studies when a new curriculum is being introduced. On one hand, Chapman and Mahlck (1997) point out that the adoption of the new curriculum may offer long term benefits to the Ministry in terms of higher levels of student's achievement. On the other hand, teachers have to spend some more time in lesson preparation. Chapman and Mahlck (1997) conclude that teachers may not implement effectively because they feel incentives are not enough.

According to the conceptual framework guiding the study, an innovation that offers advantage over the other is likely to be adopted. In this study, teachers highlighted that unlike the previous curriculum the new curriculum encourages learners to freely contribute to lessons. They argued that learners develop critical thinking skill as they discuss with their peers. In addition, teachers hailed OBE for reducing teacher talk during teaching and learning process. However, teachers claimed that OBE as a reform has brought in additional work to teachers which do not tally with what they receive.

In the context of the study, teachers do not see direct benefits accrued to the curriculum in terms of monetary gains. The feeling that they do not receive incentive prevented them to conduct themselves professionally. This is evident from Benson's comments who said that implementing this curriculum devoid of incentive is just a waste of time. Bennel (2004) notes that this reaction is very common in low income countries, he points out that in low income countries, large classes and heavy workload in relation to pay make teachers resistant to the introduction of new teaching methodologies and other innovations.

4.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The analysis of data came up with three major categories explaining the experiences of teachers in the implementation of OBE. These categories are: local/school based factors, characteristics of an innovation, and external support.

The Malawi primary school curriculum reform was based on the claims that the objective based curriculum was responsible for the decline of education standards. The introduction of OBE was an attempt to improve on education standards by focusing on learner achievement of learning outcomes. However, implementation according to teacher experience has been dominated by challenges associated with school based factors, characteristics of an innovation and external support.

According to the findings of this study, there were minimal differences in terms of experiences between primary school teachers teaching in the rural and urban areas. However, on one hand, teacher shortage was a unique problem faced by teachers in the rural areas. On the other hand, inadequate teaching and learning materials compounded by high enrolment was a common challenge experienced by teachers in the urban area.

Further the results of the study indicate that the common problem that teachers faced in the implementation process was increased assessment activities. In addition, most teachers indicated that the training was inadequate and confusing due to inconsistent information received. These results are similar to other countries which adopted OBE in their education system (Jansen, 1998).

According to the results, teachers with OBE orientation had an upper hand in having much knowledge on OBE over teachers without OBE orientation. Although this was the case, there were minimal differences in terms of implementation. Almost all teachers flouted the principles of OBE such as high expectations and expanded opportunities. This was characterised by irregular assessment activities, lack of remedial lesson, and the dominance of group work as a method of participatory teaching among others. Failure to fulfill these OBE requirements was attributed to large class size, inadequate teaching and learning materials

In context of the study, I support the intention of reforming the primary school curriculum in order to improve the education standards which were deteriorating. In addition, Malawi cannot run away from curriculum reform considering that it is the member of the global village. This being the case it is supposed to strive to be at par with other member of the globe. However, I contend that the implementation of OBE was ill conceived, void of thorough preparations to meet the demands of OBE. According to the findings of this study OBE as reform in the primary school sector is far removed from the classroom experiences in the school where this study took place.

In the next chapter I present the conclusions drawn from the study and make recommendations

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Chapter overview

This study aimed at investigating the implementation of OBE in the primary school curriculum enshrined in PCAR in the first few years of its implementation phase. Four schools were selected in the Northern Education Division; two represented the urban set up and the other two in the rural set up. This chapter provides conclusion to the findings of the study. Finally, the chapter also provides the recommendations of the study and areas for further research.

5.2. Summary and Conclusion

The main research question guiding the study was (1) how are teachers experiencing the process of implementing outcome-based education in primary schools in Malawi? This was followed by the following research questions; (1) what do teachers in Malawi know about outcome-based education? (2) How has the OBE curriculum affected the teaching and learning process? (3) What are the challenges that teachers face in implementing the Outcome-Based education? (4) What kind of institutional support do teachers get from Ministry of Education, School Heads and primary Education advisors on OBE implementation?

The results of the study have shown that teachers appreciate participatory approach in the teaching and learning process. This is so because it has reduced the burden of teacher talking throughout the lessons. Some teachers expressed that some learners are creative which enriches the teaching and learning process. However, the general feeling is that the new curriculum has brought in more stress due to the perceived increased activities and documentation.

In addition, the study has shown that most of the participants are aware that the curriculum has shifted from objective-based to outcome-based. In addition, teachers are aware that lessons must be participatory rather than teacher-centred. However, very few teachers understand the principles guiding OBE. Most of the teachers feel that by conducting participatory teaching approach such as group work, they are implementing OBE. According to the findings, this is so because the training/ orientation mostly focussed on classroom practice and how to make sense of the records. As a result of this most tenets of OBE are neglected thereby making the reform not achieve what it intends to achieve.

There is evidence from the results that OBE has a significant influence on teaching and learning process. Teachers now are aware of a variety of teaching and learning methods and the need to use them. There is an attempt by teachers to use participatory learning approaches. Learners take an active role by discussing in groups and presenting their findings to class. However, interview, observation and document analysis revealed that the teaching and learning process lack variety. Most teachers use group work at the

expense of other teaching methodologies, this result into monotony. This observation cuts across both the rural and urban schools

The findings of the study indicate that the main support was provided by the PEA. The support provided by the PEA was in form of supervision and ideas on how to improve the teaching and learning process. In line with this, the most visited schools are those found in the urban areas. In rural area Macheso was the most visited school this is so because the PEA's office is at the school.

The results of the study also noted that apart from the PEA and other government officials, the schools in the urban setting benefited from the visits by religious organisations, both local and international non-governmental organisations and individuals. These provided material support in form of teaching and learning materials, desks, chalkboards, reading materials for learners with disabilities and many more.

However, the study reveals that teachers face a number of challenges in the implementation process. These challenges emanated from increased demands of the curriculum, the school based factors and the external support they receive and are explained in detail below.

To start with, the majority of teachers in both zones complained that the nature of the new curriculum has increased workload on teachers especially on record writing and record keeping. Teachers indicated that they spend most of their time filling records and

doing various calculations needed in the assessment procedures. Due to this pressure of work, some teachers either resort to cheating or guess learner performance especially the checklist while other schools records are non existence.

Secondly, the study revealed that the nature of the curriculum is at variance with the conditions of the schools. Most schools are characterised by large class size which make it impossible to satisfy the demands of OBE. One major aspect neglected in OBE is the provision of remedial lessons; most teachers reported that they are unable to carry out remedial lesson due to large classes and additional work brought in by OBE curriculum. Although one school in one of the rural areas has an average of twenty learners in class, the school is characterised by severe teacher shortage which further strain teachers in the implementation of OBE. Furthermore, apart from the perceived high workload, understaffing and large class size, the schools do not have enough teaching and learning materials which pose a major threat to the implementation process.

Finally, the majority of teachers complained that the implementation of OBE has been associated with confusion during the orientation process and supervision. Although teachers complained of inadequate orientation, the major problem noted from this orientation were the inconsistent or changing information teachers received from various orientations. In addition, teachers complained that they received conflicting advice from different PEAs during supervision this resulted into confusion and dilemma on deciding the type of advice to follow.

In summary, the introduction of Outcome-Based Education in Malawi primary schools marks a step forwards in trying to improve learner achievement by focussing on the achievement of learning outcomes on an individual learner. However, the school under study are operating in a resource scarce environment which makes teachers to work under constant pressure and strain. If the issues are not taken into consideration during the implementation of OBE then the intention of the school reform will remain a mystery and a replica of the 1991 curriculum woes.

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the challenges and opportunities noted in the study the following are recommendations to improve teaching in the OBE primary school curriculum.

5.3.1. Assessment and record keeping

The findings of the study have shown that CA is helpful in tracking learner's performance and deciding provision of support. This activity needs to be supported by both government and parents by providing learners with all that they need in their school work. In addition, parents need to ensure that their learners attend school regularly and should be on the forefront checking learner's progress at school.

In order to ensure quality assessment reflecting the real data of learner performance, there is need for curriculum developers to revise the assessment tools to reflect the contextual factors of large classes. Special attention should be given to the use of a

checklist as an assessment tool. In addition, there is need to reduce the assessment tools which provide similar data for instance rubric and performance registers. A way must be found to merge the data into one record to avoid duplication of work.

Further, it was noted that record keeping is erratic in most schools. At one school there were virtually no records on learner assessment. It is therefore important to emphasise that teachers and schools must keep records on learner performance as it is central to the requirements of OBE. In addition, there is need to explore ways that can make teachers develop a strong sense of professionalism to ensure that they provide accurate data on learner performance. By providing false data on student's performance, it means teachers do not attach value to learners outcome as such they are abrogating their duties to align their teaching towards achieving OBE principles.

5.3.2. Teaching and Learning Resources

Teachers highlighted shortage of textbooks, learner's exercise books and charts as a challenge in the implementation of OBE. There is need therefore that the government must provide these materials to schools facing such challenges. However, there is also need for the schools to take care of the materials provided to them by the government.

In addition, it is high time the community and parents took an active role in the provision of these materials to learners. In view of this, government through the Ministry of Education should engage private publishing companies to produce teaching and learning materials for open market consumption. This would enable parents to purchase learning

materials to their children. In the same vein, schools would be able to introduce book replenishment policy in situation where a pupil loses a school book or the when the PTA or school committees plan to buy learning materials for the school.

5.3.3. Training/ Orientation of teachers

The government needs to be commended for trying to reach out to many teachers through orientation and training workshops. However, inadequate training / orientation and inconsistent information during orientating have been a recurrent theme in the study. In addition, OBE requires that teachers use a variety of teaching methodologies; sadly, the study noted that group work is overused at the expense of other methods and sometimes teachers are unable to stimulate discussion. In view of this, there is need to further train teachers in order to be well grounded in the concept of OBE so that their activities should not depart from the requirement of OBE. There is also great need to enhance school based inserts. This can be done by sending experts in OBE for assistance using the relevant structures in the Ministry of Education Science and Technology.

In addition, there is need to critically analyse the training model used to ensure that all stakeholder who provide support to the schools have the same information. Teachers should also be trained in all the teaching methods in order for them to acquire the skills that would induce learner participation.

5.3.4. Response of PCAR to language policy

The language policy demands that the early stages of primary school from standard one to four use dominant local language within their setup. The results of the study have shown that PCAR has not taken into consideration the language policy by provision of materials and Tikwere interactive radio program. The materials are written in Chichewa thereby giving teachers an extra work to interpret them. In addition, the Tikwere interactive radio program which is offered in the lower classes is in Chichewa which is different from the language of instruction for schools in some areas. In view of this, the study recommends that the teaching and learning materials should be written in the language reflecting the language of instruction used in these areas.

5.3.5. Teacher Supervision

Although there is an attempt by the PEA's to supervise the schools during the implementation process, not all teachers are supervised, there is need to further strengthen these supervisory activities especially in the early stages. Studies have revealed that when a new curriculum is introduced there is need for constant supervision to ensure that proper guidance and support is provided.

5.3.6. Level of primary school teacher involvement in curriculum formulation

Although the documents indicate that the conceptualization of PCAR involved a wide cross-section of stakeholder including primary school teachers. The study shows that most teachers perceived that they were not adequately consulted. This perceived gap between policy makers and implementers brings a lot of questions about the level of

participation of various stakeholders in the reform process. In view of this, there is need to find out the level of participation of primary school teachers during consultation process.

In addition, it is important to know the extent to which the views of primary school teachers are incorporated into the curriculum. Further, there is need to devise a communication network which would enable those participating in policy formulation to disseminate the proceedings of consultations to their colleagues in the system. This would enable policy makers to get immediate feedback before proceeding to next action. To achieve all these, government must use the existing Teacher Development centers (TDC) as a link to teachers at grassroots level. This can be achieved if well qualified personnel conversant with curriculum issues manage these centres. In turn these might become centres of innovations, information bank necessary in facilitating change process at grass-root level.

5.3.7. Teacher incentive

The results of the study indicate that teachers feel that the government is providing little motivation as expected. Teachers are unhappy with the way promotion is done consequently they feel the sense of neglect. As a result of this the morale of teachers is at lowest level. Lack of teacher morale in turn reduces the effectiveness of the teacher during curriculum implementation. In view of this, the government needs to ensure that promotions are done consistently and fairly. There is need to motivate those teachers who

are outstanding in the teaching and learning process. This can be done by using them to be resource persons during professional development activities.

5.4. Suggestions for further research

The study investigated the experiences of teachers in the implementation of OBE in primary schools by focusing on the knowledge they have and the challenges and opportunities they encounter in the implementation process. However, future studies need to go beyond this. The following are the areas this study proposes for future studies;

1. There is need for future studies to investigate whether teaching and learning process in various learning areas is really outcome-based or not.
2. How receptive are learners towards participatory teaching approaches
3. The extent to which primary school teachers are involved in curriculum development process
4. Investigate whether pupil assessment is used for learning improvement

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Appendix A1 Interview guide for teachers

Bio-data Age Years of teaching

Knowledge

1. What do you know about outcome-based education?
2. What are outcomes?
3. How different are outcomes from objectives?
4. What role do you play in the classroom as regard to OBE?
5. How do you organize the teaching and learning process?
6. How different is the new curriculum in terms of teaching?

Support

7. Have you been trained in the new curriculum of OBE?
8. Explain the experiences as regards to the training/ workshop you participated in OBE
9. How has the training on OBE equipped you with skills on implementation of OBE curriculum
10. How frequent are you observed and offered advice during implementation, and who provides this support?
11. What are the areas that you need support?
12. How do you get information on OBE?
13. Are meetings being held within the school to discuss about OBE if yes describe the experiences from these meeting

Networking

14. How do you relate with others within the school in terms of OBE implementation
15. How do you relate with other schools within your cluster in terms of the implementation of the OBE curriculum?
16. How do you relate with policy makers in relation with OBE implementation?

Reactions and challenges

17. What is your opinion on the new assessment procedures?
18. Would you wish your child to be exposed to the OBE curriculum?
19. What do you like best in the OBE curriculum?
20. How do you think you or the authorities would promote the best aspects in OBE?
21. What are the challenges you are encountering in the process implementing OBE curriculum?
22. What are your personal experiences in the implementation of OBE?

Appendix A2 Interview guide for Head Teachers

Bio-data

Age _____

Years of teaching _____

Knowledge

1. What do you know about outcome-based education?
2. What are outcomes?
3. How different are outcomes from objectives?
4. What role do you play in the classroom as regard to OBE?
5. How different is the new curriculum in terms of teaching?

Training

6. Have you been trained in the new curriculum of OBE being implemented in primary schools?
7. How long has been the training? Has there been a follow up training?
8. Explain the experiences as regards to the training/ workshop you participated
9. How adequate has the training workshop provided you with capacity to enhance OBE implementation?

Support

10. What form of support do your office get from outside as regards to the implementation of OBE
11. What is your office doing to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum?
12. What experiences do you encounter with teachers in relation to OBE implementation?
13. What do you do when you are confronted with a problem in OBE?
14. What challenges do you face in the process of implementing the curriculum?
15. How do you deal with the challenges you are facing
16. What measure have you put in place to ensure that there is smooth implementation of the curriculum?

Networking

22. How do you relate with other schools within the cluster in the implementation of OBE
23. What personal initiative have you made in terms of networking with other school heads implementing OBE
24. How are the teachers relating with each other in the process of implementing OBE
25. How do you relate with teachers in relation to OBE implementation.
26. How do you relate with policy makers in relation with OBE implementation?
 - MIE, MOE, EDM, DEM, PEA, Headteachers

Reactions and challenges

28. What is your opinion on the new assessment procedures?
29. What do you think about the new curriculum of OBE being implemented in primary schools?
30. What do you like best in the OBE curriculum?
31. How do you think you or the authorities would promote the best aspects in OBE?
32. What areas need to be improved in the curriculum?
33. How would you like those areas to be improved?
34. What are your personal experiences in the implementation of OBE?
 - Positive
 - negative

Thank you for participating in the study

Appendix A3 Interview guide for PEA's

Knowledge

1. What do you know about outcome-based education?
2. What are outcomes?
3. How different are outcomes from objectives
4. What is the belief behind outcomes based education?
5. How has the new curriculum influenced teaching and learning process?
6. What are the assessment procedures in OBE?

Training

7. Have you been trained in OBE curriculum?
8. How long was your training/ orientation for OBE?
9. How do you assess the training you participated in OBE
10. What is the role of your office in the implementation process?
11. How do you rate the capacity of your office in the OBE curriculum implementation?
12. What are the challenges you are facing?
13. What do you do to counter the challenges?
14. What is the atmosphere like when you visit the schools?
15. How do you assess the progress in the implementation of OBE in schools?
16. What is your overall evaluation of OBE curriculum implementation in primary schools?

Thank you for participating in the study

Appendix B1 observation checklist

Observation checklist

Name of the school _____
Date _____
Time _____
Teacher _____
Class _____
Learning area _____
Number of learners in class _____

- Seating arrangement

Use of audio visual materials.

- i.e charts, video, information display on OBE

Classroom atmosphere

- Teacher pupil relationship
- Pupil to pupil relationship
- Learner participation

Teaching and learning process

- Are outcomes stated to learners?
- Teacher use of learner prior knowledge
- Involvement of learner practical examples

Role of the learners and the teacher

- Is the teacher acting as a facilitator or transmitter of information?
- Are learners active or passive?

Assessment

Appendix C1 contact summary form

This form summarizes questions of a particular field contact.

Contact type _____ Site _____

Visit _____ Contact date _____

Phone _____ written by _____

Main issues in the contact

Summary of information got or not got in the contact

Illuminating issues in the contact

New questions which need to be considered in the second contact with the site

Appendix C2 Document summary form

Site _____

Document _____

Date received _____

Name of the document _____

Events associated with the document

Significance of the document

Brief summary of the document

Appendix D1 Permission letter

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE
Department of Educational Foundations

PRINCIPAL
Emmanuel Fabiano, B.Ed., MSc., Ph.D.

P. O. Box 280, Zomba, MALAWI
Tel: (265) 01 522 222
Telex: 44742 CHANCOL MI
Fax: (265) 01 522 046
Email: edf@chanco.unima.mw.

Our Ref.: CATS/6/19
Your Ref.:

1st June 2010

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

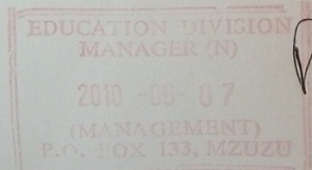
Introducing Mr Wezi Chiziwa

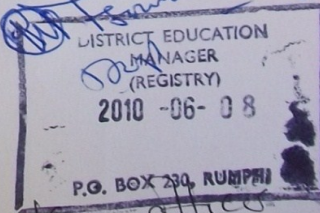
I have the pleasure to introduce to you Mr Wezi Chiziwa, our M.Ed [Social Studies Education] student in the Department of Curriculum and teaching Studies, Faculty of Education. To fulfill some of the requirements for the program, Wezi intends to carry out a study on Outcome Based Education in primary schools in Malawi.

I therefore write to kindly ask for your support towards his study as he collects the appropriate data.

I thank you in anticipation for your cooperation and support.


Foster Kholowa (PhD)
Senior Lecturer in Language Education
Head of Curriculum and Teaching Studies Department





Please assist accordingly.

Assist in the office

18/2/2010

Appendix E1 an interview extract of teacher Benson

Data
TT: what is your role as the teacher in teaching and learning process RR: I can say that in this new curriculum its too involving. There are a lot of activities. there's too much work to a teacher so instead of concentrating on assisting the learners you concentrate on our job because there are lot of record book of which in the process of teaching you should have .. example is the checklist whereby in the process of teaching and also you should have to tick to assess the learners but with that old curriculum you teach them then after teaching you can give the learners a test may be weekend test then after giving them a test then you can award them marks. Or may be you can give them a test may be after a month but with this new curriculum in the process of teaching you do something so you concentrate your work may be instead of assisting the learners so full time you concentrate on your work as the result you kill the learners. TT: how do you organise the classroom RR: Because we have got a lot of learners in a class so most of the times I use group work as a method of controlling or managing the class. Sometimes most of the times I use group work so that each learner should participate. TT: how different is it in term of teaching with the past RR: with this new curriculum comparing with old curriculum I can say that somehow its good because we are not adapted to one methodologies of which there are future wheels but the past we were not using future wheels there is brainstorming whereby you ask question then pupils answer without saying that is not correct and also discussion was there but some of the methodologies are new and we are adapted to those methodologies and yet we are using those methodologies and I can say that some how somewhere the curriculum its good in terms of teaching because were now adapted to the new methodologies which we are using in the process of teaching and learning TT: have you been trained in OBE RR: not full training because it was just a training of 1 week of which there was too much work . and being a new thing it as therefore for us in order to train for may be for month so that we should have to know whatever is there in a new curriculum but it was just a matter of one week training whereby there were some people were trained and those trainers they came and also trained us. Some of the things even to them it was difficult to explain some of the things. There was no follow up training TT: what are the areas you feel they had difficulties in training RR: record books. Whereby in fact The facilitations confused us because the first trainees were the std 1 they went there they trained them how to write some of the record book and the 2nd group was std 5 and 6 they went there and being part and they say that ahh no no. No no no.. this is not the way we should write this record book we have been trained that we should write in this way. Then after the std 3 & 4 they went there for training they came back and they said there were other changes. They said this is not the way how we should write this and that this is the way how we have been trained know much what is there I new curriculum

Appendix E2 Summary of lesson observation

Teacher : Adija Class : standard 6 Time: 9:35am : Number of pupils : 90 DATE :13th July 2010

Topic : Heat energy

Lesson observation summary

The lesson started with questions on previous lesson. Later learners were told to be in groups to discuss the uses of heat energy and its negative effects. Pupils reported their findings by individually writing on the chalk boards. The class has chalkboards around all the walls. After that the teacher and the whole class summarised the points raised by pupils. This was followed by a written exercise.

Teacher reflection

The teacher noted that most learners were not participating in groups. She noted that there were too many activities hence content was not covered thoroughly.

Observations

- The lesson extended to another period
- Expected outcomes not stated
- Pupils attempted to participate though others were not actively participating.
- Pupils were seated on the floor
- A lot of pupils in one group average of 12
- During the interview after the lesson it was further revealed that the teacher wanted to impress me on how they are implementing OBE according to its requirements, but when they are alone they mix with old methods.

“Normally that was how we were told to be conducting ourselves. But we mix with old methods when we are alone. Noting that you have come for your studies, I felt obliged to teach according to the requirements of OBE”

“We want our pupils to be used to both old and new ways, because when the officials come, they want us to follow what OBE stipulates. But pupils do not know that sometimes we do this and that. However, the officials want us to follow their OBE”

Through probing the teacher pointed out that pupils lose concentration because the time for learning is too much from 7:30 to 2pm. It is not easy to carry out remedial lessons, provide summary notes because of too much record work.

Again it was noted that most of the lessons emphasises on group work and it becomes boring.

Appendix F1 chart used to teach reading in standard four

a	e	i	o	u
ba	be	bi	bo	bu
baba	ababa			
a	e	i	o	u
da	de	di	do	du
dadi	adadi	odi	bedi	
a	e	i	o	u
fa	fe	fi	fo	fu
afa	bafa	befu	ufa	
a	e	i	o	u
ga	ge	gi	go	gu
gogo	agogo	guba	gogoda	
a	e	i	o	u
ha	he	hi	ho	hu
habu	hede			

APPENDIX F2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Outcome-based education: A method of curriculum design and teaching that focuses on what students can actually do after they are taught (Acharya, 2003).

Outcome: Clear learning results that students are supposed to demonstrate at the end of significant learning experience (Spady, 1994)