# Implementing Integrated Literacy Approaches in an English Classroom in Malawi

Edith Mmela

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty

of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Curriculum  and Instruction

Mary Alice Barksdale, Chair

Jerome A. Niles

Patricia P. Kelly

Josiah S. Tlou

April 4, 2006

Blacksburg, Virginia

Key words: professional development, second language learning,

teacher learning, collaborative inquiry, reflection

**Implementing Integrated Literacy Approaches in an English Classroom in Malawi**

Edith Mmela

(ABSTRACT))

The purpose of the study was to discover how teachers learn to teach. This was done through the process of answering the question "How does a teacher acting as a co-researcher come to understand the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches in an English classroom in Malawi?" The learner-centered integrated literacy approaches is a concept derived from a constructivist philosophy of teaching. English is an important language in Malawi because it is the official language (Kayambazinthu, 1998). For that reason children are motivated to learn it as a second language. However, their achievement in English is critically low (Banda, Mchikoma, Chimombo, & Milner, 2001;Kishindo, Susuwere, Ndalama & Mwale, 2005; Williams, 1993). According to Ministry of Education and UNICEF (1998) and Williams (1993) teachers' complete reliance on traditional teacher-centered approaches was believed to be one of the major causes of school children's failure to acquire English as a second language for their literacy development in Malawi. The assumption was that improving teacher practice by introducing constructivists-based, learner-centered, integrated literacy approaches, which are believed to be more effective for second language learning, than the former, would illuminate how teachers learn and ultimately improve teacher education practices and consequently teacher English teaching in the classroom.

Data were collected from pre- and post-study interviews, a series of audio taped lesson planning and lesson reflections, lesson observation summaries, and a researcher's journal. Data analysis and interpretation suggested that teacher learning is a gradual developmental process that depended very much on other interlaced processes of collaboration, inquiry, and reflective practice. It also demonstrated that the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches of the constructivism-based philosophy, which are also included in the Malawi curriculum but implementation is still a challenge in the primary classes, are possible. The results and process of the study could be used to improve teacher learning in Malawi. Finally, the study experience has illuminated the need for more exploration in the new areas of growth in English literacy.

## DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to my family: Grant my husband and my children Philip, Malola, and Tadala, who supported me in many ways.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

# List of Tables

# List of Figures

# CHAPTER 1
## INTRODUCTION

The role of teacher educators must encompass not only preparing teachers but also actively working with them because "if teachers cannot see and practice how new ideas fit within existing school context they may easily give up what they learn and revert to more traditional thinking." (Thomas, Cooper, & Ponticell, 2000, p. 23).

I believe that primary school teachers in Malawi have been exposed to many innovative ideas that were meant to improve their practice and consequently improve English learning in the classroom. However, putting such ideas into practice has been a challenge as indicated by what Ministry of Education and UNICEF (1998) and Stuart (200) found in their studies. In their free primary education analysis studies, Ministry of Education and UNICEF discovered that teachers use direct teaching or bottom-up approaches to teaching English in Malawi primary classes, despite the fact that the curriculum is alleged to be child-centered. Stuart, in her studies in primary school education, also found that teachers in Malawi paid lip service to learner-centered teaching as well as participatory and active learning, but in reality they used the transmission style of teaching. Tranmissionist teaching is noted as being dominated by low-level question and answer sessions. In addition, Stuart and Kunje (2000) state that the majority of primary school teachers and teacher educators in Malawi do not get opportunities for professional growth apart from being oriented to new syllabi or curricula. These findings could be a consequence of what Thomas et al. (2000) suggest in the above quotation that "if teachers cannot see and practice how new ideas fit within existing school context they may easily give up what they learn and revert to more traditional thinking." (p. 23).

Many educators are realizing that teacher quality is the major determinant of student learning in schools (Ball & Cohen, 1999) and Malawi is not an exception. Primary school teachers in Malawi are vested with the responsibility of helping children acquire English as a second language to their own native languages. Malawian children are motivated to learn English, but they do this with much difficulty and, as a result, their achievement is critically low (Kishindo, Susuwere, Ndalama & Mwale, 2005). Traditional teacher-centered approaches are

largely blamed for the low English achievement (Williams, 1993). Circumstantially, schools represent almost the only source where children can learn English because there are no English speaking models and no English literacy development materials in an average Malawi child's immediate environment (Banda, Chimombo, Mchikoma & Milner, 2001). Therefore, improving teacher quality is very essential. One way to improve teacher quality in Malawi is by helping teachers gain more knowledge about language learning (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 2000). Vacca et al. (2000) further emphasize that as teachers add knowledge and new approaches, they should also be helped in searching for balance in practicing new methods in the classroom. Gaining more knowledge and developing new teaching beliefs is not enough. Teacher must understand how their new knowledge and beliefs can be practiced in Malawi's schools and they must have opportunities to put their new knowledge into practice. Otherwise, they are likely to easily give up what they learn and revert to more traditional methods (Thomas et al., 2000).

During my doctoral studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Curriculum and Instruction in English Education I acquired knowledge about learner-centered integrated literacy approaches to teaching language. As a teacher educator, I was motivated and challenged to introduce the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches to a primary school teacher and examine how she learned, with an assumption that the knowledge gained might be used to improve teacher learning approaches in teacher education programs in Malawi. Integrated literacy approaches are believed to be more effective in learning a language than traditional teacher-centered approaches that are currently dominant in English teacher education and ultimately primary schools in Malawi (Stuart & Kunje, 2000). Regrettably, although the Malawi curriculum alleges to be learner-centered, in practice teachers still use traditional teacher-centered approaches (Ministry of Education & UNICEF, 1998).

For this reason, I was motivated to conduct an action school-based research study to explore whether a teacher could understand and implement learner-centered integrated literacy approaches in an English class in Malawi. The study was designed to bring theory and practice together and examine how a teacher would learn about integrated literacy approaches and put them into practice.

The learner-centered integrated literacy approach is a constructivism-based idea that emphasizes active learning (Bransford, Brown & Cockings, 2000). Active learning is in keeping with the principles of language learning indicating that language learning is an on-going active

process (Bransford et al., 2000). Additionally, integrated literacy instruction has been shown to have positive effects in learning a language in a classroom (Gavelek, Raphael, Biondo, & Wang, 1999). These approaches exceed traditional teacher-centered approaches with regard to effective language learning. Traditional approaches place the learner in a passive role, and passive language learning is ineffective in terms of the learner's ability to make productive use of the new language in speech and writing.

## Background Information about Malawi and English Language in Schools

Malawi is a developing country in southern east Africa. It shares boarders with Zambia to the west, Tanzania to the north, and Mozambique to the south, southeast and southwest. It is a multilingual country with about thirteen languages. English is either the second or third language for Malawian children. The people of Malawi include Chewa, Nyanja, Tumbuka, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Ngoni, Ngonde, Asian, and European cultural groups. However, only two languages are given appreciation nationwide. These languages are Chichewa and English. Chichewa is given recognition by Malawi government because it is the *national language*. It was selected as a language of unity for the Malawi nation (Kayambazinthu, 1998). English, although foreign, has been the *official language* of the country since Malawi was a colony of Britain (Kayambazinthu, 1998), and it is the language of government and business.

Approximately 80% of Malawian children speak Chichewa in their homes prior to entering school. Because it is the language of government and the official language of the country, English has more importance than Chichewa. The status of these two languages in schools remains a controversial issue in Malawi that is beyond the scope of this paper. In 1994, a policy was made that children should learn in their mother tongue languages. This decision was made for political rather than research reasons. The policy was never implemented until recently, possibly because there are no books written in the local languages nor are teachers trained to handle diverse multilingual education. Not much is written in Chichewa either. Learning the Malawian native languages does not fulfill students' needs for literacy development, especially as they advance with education. Tests that allow students to progress from primary to secondary school require a high level of English proficiency in terms of text comprehension and writing, so it is essential that Malawian children become proficient in English.

English and Chichewa are the dominant languages in the elementary school curriculum. Therefore, this paper dealt with the primary school environment in which these two languages are used and studied. Owing to the roles that English and Chichewa play in Malawi, the languages are incorporated in the school's curriculum at all levels of schooling (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1991).

Schools in Malawi are organized into three levels: primary school for eight years, secondary school for four years, and tertiary education various periods of time depending on the type of course and institution. Transition from one level to another is determined by passing government national examinations with English proficiency serving as the final determiner for getting a passing score. As such, English is a compulsory subject at all levels. Thus, this paper focused on the learning of English as a second language at the primary school education level.

The primary school level is crucial in children's education because it is the foundation of the other school levels (UNICEF, 1993). One of the Malawi primary school's curriculum general objective states that by the end of the eight years' course, children should have acquired the basic skills of communication in English (Ministry of Education, 1991). In reality, this is rarely achieved. As a result, students do not fair very well when they take the Malawi Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (MPSLCE). Children's success in school depends on how well they perform in English alongside other curriculum subjects that are offered. Other subjects have no passing value if English is not passed. Therefore, children cannot proceed to secondary school level without passing English. Table 1 shows the transition rate of primary school children to secondary school.

As illustrated by the statistics in Table 1, about 8% of primary students pass the MPSLCE and are selected to go to secondary school and the rest (over 90%) are left behind with no alternatives for future schooling. Although there are several reasons that pupils fail to complete primary school and pass the MPSLCE, failure to pass English is the highest contributing factor. This is compounded by a selection system that screens students out of education. After the MPSLCE national examinations, few are selected because of the limited spaces available in the secondary school system. In Malawi, primary education is important not only because of its foundational functions, but also because it is terminal for many school-going children. It is essential that all children acquire basic literacy skills of English by the end of the eight years'

period. (A paradox is that the free primary school reform policy encourages all children to go to school and at the same time eliminates them through the MPSLCE.)

It is with this background in mind that this research study examines teacher learning as one way of improving children's achievements in English.

## Rationale

The importance of learning English in Malawi schools cannot be over emphasized. Though foreign and a native language of a very small minority, English plays important roles in Malawi. It is the language of government, commerce and education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1991), and a language for socioeconomic advancement, a means to acquiring information in the scientific and technological world, and it is a determining factor in the Malawian job market (Kayambazinthu, 1998). Further, English is the first existing global language and the most widely spoken and written language on the planet (used by about 800 million people) (Farris, 2001). For these reasons, English is a mandatory subject in Malawi's schools as stipulated by government policy (Williams, 2002). The policy states that children should be taught in Chichewa for the first four years of primary school with English being taught simultaneously as a subject. The logic behind this is that children learn better and faster if they are taught in their mother tongue during the early years. In addition, the mother tongue can be a prerequisite for learning a foreign language (Carrasquillo & Hedley, 1993; Krashen, 2003). From grades five to eight, English becomes the medium of instruction (except when students are learning Chichewa as a subject). The major goal of English education is to have students acquire English language competencies by the end of primary schooling. As already mentioned, it is a final condition for permitting students to transit to the next school level – secondary school (and probably the economic future of the individual). Reading and writing practices in Malawi are almost entirely in English.  For instance, the daily newspapers are all printed in English. Thus, every child should have access to effective English language instruction.

Unfortunately, many children do not achieve English language competencies as expected and many factors contribute to this lack of achievement. Just to sight a few examples, there is a lack of reading materials and English-speaking models, classrooms are overcrowded, the majority of primary teachers are not competent in English (Banda et al., 2001), and the teaching approaches

**Table 1: Transition statistics from primary to secondary school.**

| Took exam | Passed | Form One place | Transition rate % |
|-----------|--------|----------------|-------------------|
| 96,000 | 60,418 | 7,550 | 8.0 |
| 97,600 | 65,535 | 7,550 | 8.7 |
| 103,833 | 82,288 | 7,620 | 10.6 |
| 116,992 | 84,956 | 7,700 | 11.0 |
| 120,881 | 74,644 | 8,004 | 9.3 |

Source: Free Primary Education: The Malawi experience 1994-98.

Policy Analysis Study, p. 26.

used do not facilitate foreign language acquisition (Stuart, 2002). Despite these factors, some students do learn English well. Teachers in Malawi have almost the sole responsibility of helping students acquire English language basic communication skills. For many children, the classroom is almost the only place where they come face-to-face with English language. This is a big challenge to the teachers. It is assumed that teachers do have an effect on pupils' success in schools, not only in learning but also in attainment of other personal capacities such as attitudes and values (Dove, 1986).

Williams (2002), in his research report on Malawi education, stated that Malawi children read much better in their local language and were weak in English. He pointed out that some of these weaknesses could be attributed to teachers' approaches that do not facilitate reading for understanding. Further, Stuart (2002) noted teachers' use of inappropriate approaches to teaching English in Malawi, suggesting that the poor teaching approaches used by teachers was a consequence of how teachers were trained; they do what they were taught to do and what was modeled for them by their own teachers.

In their study of teacher education, (Stuart & Kunje, 2000) found that teacher-training colleges in Malawi relied on the traditional teacher-centered or direct teaching methods. Direct teaching approaches are characterized by grammatical analysis, reading without comprehension, and patterned drills resulting in students' scoring well on grammar tests but failing to communicate in the target language (Crawford 2003). The consequences of students not becoming competent in English language skills are detrimental because students fail examinations and cannot continue with schooling in the way the school system is designed. Williams (2002) also pointed out that "The introduction of English is a complex issue which requires policy to be informed by a contextualized understanding of the social linguistics and classroom realities which exist today" (p. 695).

Most of the studies conducted regarding teaching and learning English as a second language approach the topic from a general perspective. That is, there have been a number of studies that have identified common problem characteristics such as overcrowding, lack of resources, and unqualified and linguistically insecure teachers (Westrup, 1992). There is need for studies that look into subject specific problem areas of teaching English for the sake of informing teacher education programs in Malawi. This was supported by Kishindo et al. (2005) in their survey of achievement levels of core subjects (including English). Kishindo et. al. made a short-

term policy recommendation, suggesting classroom/school-based action research as one of the approaches to identify subject-based challenges that contribute to learners' low achievement.

Krashen (2003) and Vacca et al. (2000) argue that approaches to teaching language other than mother tongue using a bottom-up approach or language fragmentation are not effective. In addition, Gavelek et al., (1999) suggest that integrated literacy instruction produces positive language learning results (Gavelek et al., 1999; Goodman, 1992; Krashen, 2000).

## Statement of the Problem

In Malawian primary schools, learner achievement in English is critically low. Evidence of this problem has been supported by four studies conducted by Williams (2002), Banda et al., (2001), Stuart (2002), and Kishindo et al., (2005). First, Williams (2002) research reports on the first and second language reading proficiency of year 3, 4 and 6 children in Malawi and Zambia. This study showed that Malawian children read better in their local language, Chichewa, but were weak in English. Williams further stated that the dominant pedagogical practices in primary schools contributed much to the low level of English proficiency. Secondly, Banda et al., (2001) studied the level of achievement for standard six reading literacy, finding that 99.4 percent of learners did not reach the desirable reading level in English, and describing the situation as a deplorable state of affairs. Kishindo et al., (2005) in their case study of twelve districts in Malawi, found that learner achievement in the four core subjects including English was critically low. However, several inter-laced factors were mentioned as contributing for the low achievement in English including lack of learning resources and inappropriate teaching approaches for language learning.

Teaching approaches have been featured as one of the major factors contributing to the low level English achievement. For example, Williams (1993) indicated that the dominant traditional teacher-centered approach to teaching English currently practiced in Malawi schools did not produce effective results and make it possible for learners to acquire the level of English competency required for success. The Ministry of Education and UNICEF (1998) supported the supported the position that teachers use traditional approaches to teach English despite the fact that the curriculum is expected to be child-centered. Stuart and Kunje (2002) and Williams (2002) further supported Ministry of Education and UNICEF (1998) in finding that teachers pay

lip service to learner-centered teaching, participatory and active learning, but in reality use a transmission style. Additionally, Stuart and Kunje (2000) found that primary teacher education colleges base their teaching and learning practices in the traditional teacher-centered approaches that are characterized by grammatical analysis, reading without comprehension, and pattern drills. As a result, students score well on grammar tests but fail to communicate in English (Crawford, 2003). In these traditional approaches, teachers are trained like technicians with restricted roles, thus delivering a fixed curriculum without questioning or engaging in further development (Stuart & Kunje, 2000).

McIntyre and Byrd (2000) point out that teachers cannot give what they don't have. This study was designed to introduce learner-centered integrated literacy approaches to a practicing teacher as an alternative teaching approach to the traditional teacher-centered approach, as a possible means of improving English teaching in a Malawian class. As already mentioned schools represent almost the only environment in which children can learn English because there are no English speaking models and no English literacy development materials in an average Malawian child's environment (Banda et al, 2001). For this reason, facilitating teacher development could be one of the major means of dealing with the problem of low-level English achievement.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how a primary school teacher acting as a co-researcher came to understand and implement learner-centered integrated literacy approaches in an English classroom in Malawi. Several assumptions underpin this study. First, to understand implies learning. Learning, according to Smith (1998), is negotiating what one already knows with new knowledge. The assumption is that the co-researcher's existing knowledge was grounded in behaviorist or traditional teacher-centered perspectives. The assumption is based on the findings of Stuart & Kunje (2000), who concluded that Malawian teachers were trained based on the traditional teacher-centered approaches; hence, they practice these same approaches in their own classes. In this study, one teacher was to be introduced to constructivist-based learner-centered integrated literacy approaches that were very different from traditional teacher-centered practices.

## Organization of the Study

A description of the study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one provides the decision behind initiating the study, why English is an issue in Malawi schools, the statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study.

Chapter two presents the literature review that helped to enlighten the researcher on the concepts underpinning the question under study. Thus, it first gives a detailed description of the traditional teacher-centered approaches, how people learn a second language based on theories of language learning and their implications in learning, the role the first language has in learning a second language, learner-centered integrated literacy approaches with a focus on reading and writing, and issues of pupil engagement as they relate to reading and writing. Finally, it briefly discusses how teachers learn to teach.

Chapter three discusses the methodology by first explaining why the action research case study was selected, the context of study, the process of selection of a participant, how the collaboration was initiated and what was done to overcome resistance, the procedures for collecting data, and lastly, how the data were analyzed.

Chapter four reports the results of analysis and interpretations of data for the single case study. This chapter begins by giving a description of the research class including teachers and children in the class and the events that were occurring when the study started. Next, a portrait of the lesson cyclic process is presented. This is followed by a description of analysis of the change process, then my own story as the initiator of the study. Finally, the chapter explains the teacher's experiences with the leaner-centered integrated literacy approaches.

Chapter five presents a summary of this action research study whose purpose was to examine how a teacher acting as a co-researcher came to understand learner-centered integrated literacy approaches in an English class in Malawi. This is followed by the participating teacher's epilogue of the study, then a discussion of the feasibility of integrated literacy approaches in Malawi. Chapter five also includes a discussion of the implications of the study for teacher education in Malawi, followed by some recommendation for future studies, and lastly, a summary of the whole study.

# CHAPTER 2
# REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To answer the research question for this study, " How does a teacher come to understand the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches in an English class in Malawi?" I reviewed the related literature to get a better understanding of the concepts underpinning the study. First, I studied the traditional teacher-centered approaches currently used to teach English in Malawi elementary classes. Then, I examine how people learn a second language based on theories about language learning and their implications in learning. Thirdly, I reviewed literature about integrated literacy approaches and the reasons I wanted to focus on reading and writing in relation to the other language arts, and how these are influenced by active learning. Lastly, I briefly examined how teachers learn to teach.

## Current Approaches Used to Teach English in Malawi

Currently, the teacher-centered approach, sometimes referred to as the traditional approach, is dominant in Malawian elementary classes (Williams, 1993; Ministry of Education and UNICEF, 1998; Stuart, 2000). The traditional teacher-centered approach is based on structural and behavioral psychology (Bransford et al., 2000). Menyuk (2003) explains that the behaviorists' influence on the hypotheses about language learning can be traced to before 1960. In the traditional approaches, language is described as a set of habits learned through stimulus, response and reward conditions (Menyuk, 2003). It is characterized by memorization of grammatical sequences and oral pattern drills. Having experienced this type of instruction, English language learners score very well on grammar tests, but rarely are capable of communicating in English. They read but without comprehension and translate English text with much difficulty. Students assume passive roles and there is little feedback from the teacher to the learner. Moreover, learning is limited to low levels of learning, that is, memorizing facts in order to pass tests. Teachers often ask questions which can be answered by a single word. Such language exchange limits rather than expands children's language and learning. Teachers generally decide what will be talked, read or written about and how. Children are faced with a

contradictory situation with regard to how language functions because in their home environments talking develops out of common practical everyday activities, while at school it is controlled and centers around tasks that are relatively abstract and have little to do with prior knowledge (Newman, 1985).

Traditional teacher-centered approaches to teaching and learning English are also reflected in the teacher education programs in Malawi. Stuart and Kunje (2000) observed that Malawian teachers were trained as technicians and were charged with restricted roles of delivering the curriculum. Apparently, teachers of English in the schools practice what they experience in their teacher education programs.

The new science of learning based on the concepts, theories, and hypotheses that convenes around constructivism underscores the earlier science of the behaviorist models (Bransford et al., 2000). Constructivists define learning as the construction of meaning related to what the learner already knows, in order to build and integrate new ideas. From this perspective, learning and development are both social and cognitive processes (Menyuk, 2003). Children are actively involved and participate in tasks and they are led to discover meaning through activities that simultaneously extend their facility with language as well as their understanding of the world (Newman, 1985). Constructivist-based second language acquisition theories are based on communicative approaches rather than grammar-based approaches. Next, the paper discusses the role of theories in language teaching.

Theories of language acquisition are important for two major reasons. One is that most language teaching methodologies have grown out of a particular theoretical framework of second language acquisition. Hence, is helpful for teachers to understand some of the premise underlying those approaches so they are able to evaluate them. The other reason for understanding underlying second language theories is that these understandings can provide support to teachers in developing their own beliefs for language teaching. Every teacher already has a theory of language learning, but in most cases, these theories have never been articulated. Theories of language learning can be evidenced in teachers' instructional behaviors; when teachers choose particular instructional approaches over others, it is an indication that they are basing their decision making upon underlying assumptions about what is useful. However, teachers should be cautious not to take theory as all-powerful (Hadley, 2001). Teachers should consider various educational theories and movements as tentative guides for instruction because

knowledge of learning can change and is continually strengthened through research. Teachers should be able to stand back and examine events from more than one perspective and apply theory to practice and practice to theory, rather than daily hurrying from one event to another (McIntyre & Byrd, 2000).

## Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Several theories are significant for language learning and acquisition. Menyuk (2003) claims that theories of language acquisition that stress the cognitive development and how input affects development have obvious importance for the teaching of language arts. Learner input underscores the importance of communicative interaction as a vehicle for language growth (Menyuk, 2003). For the sake of this paper, only three theories are highlighted. These are Vygotsky's, Chomsky's and Krashen's input theories of second language acquisition.

### *Vygotsky's Theory of Zone of Proximal Development*

Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) highlights the role of social interaction in learning and development, including second language learning. The ZPD can be defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving, and level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Shrum & Glisan, 2000, p.8). In simple terms, the ZPD is the learners progress from the actual development level to a higher potential developmental level through interaction with others; therefore, between the actual developmental level and the potential developmental level is the learner's zone of proximal development.  The ZPD represents the opportunity for growth in which children require support or facilitation from others. These "others" could be adults, parents, older children or peers with more expertise related to the learning task. These assistants in the social setting take control of those portions of a task that are beyond the learners' current level of competence, thus allowing the learners to focus on the elements within their range of ability. Providing support for movement from a current level of development to the potential level of development is referred to as scaffolding (McGee & Richgels, 2000). Scaffolding strategies can be provided in form of questions, prompts, rephrasing, demonstrations, gestures, visual resources, graphic organizers,

dramatizations, tasks, designing the environment to facilitate practice of a particular skill, talking, explaining, and comprehension monitoring. These strategies enable students to sustain active participation in learning activities (Crawford, 2003). If the skill under study is outside children's ZPD, the child may ignore scaffolding strategies or fail to use the strategy or piece of information appropriately. For this reason, teachers must be sensitive to learners' reactions to the strategies being used (McGee, & Richgels, 2000; Pollard, 2001). Students can successfully acquire language through scaffolding provided by other learners. Language and social interaction can act as a go-between for learners and the world around them.

Vygotsky further proposes that, while learning is facilitated by external use of language, learners are also capable of using internal dialoging called "private speech" or "speech for the self." Private speech aids second language learners as they look for, plan, and organize thoughts for problem solving, especially when cognitive difficulty is encountered. Private speech is also instrumental in language play in which the learner experiments with grammatical, phonological and features of language (Menyuk, 2003; Shrum & Glisan, 2000).

Vygotsky's theory of proximal development has several implications for schools and classrooms. First, it is essential that teachers plan instruction that is developmentally appropriate for learners. For example, in language interaction, the teacher may provide more complex sentences than the learner is capable of producing to allow them to add to the vocabulary repertoire. Teachers should create socially constructive opportunities for students practice amongst themselves in a context of an activity. This promotes collaboration upon which language can be acquired. Children's ZPD's are not uniform and may differ in children from activity to activity; hence they may assume different expert-novice relationships at various tasks in their interactions. Teachers should provide opportunities for learners to interact meaningfully with others with comprehensible input of the target language. Students can work in groups to share knowledge with each other with the teacher alongside facilitating, scaffolding, pointing students in the proper directions, and assisting learners in negotiating meaning in the target language. Learners can participate in completing tasks mediated by artifacts used in real life situations such as books, visuals, audios or audiovisuals to support the development of language skills. The teacher should plan instruction that will keep the learning as close to actual practice as possible (Hung & Nichani, 2002). Knowledge of children's ZPD is also important for assessment; it helps the teacher understand the child's best performance and give a more accurate

estimate of the child's abilities (McGee & Richgels, 2000) than the grading that is realized through tests.

### *Chomsky's Input Theory*

The second theorist is Chomsky, who, like Vygotsky, acknowledges the role of input in language acquisition process. Chomsky theorized that all humans are born with a special ability to process language through an innate language acquisition device (LAD). Chomsky suggests that this device contains the principles that are universal to all languages. Children acquire their first language by hearing it spoken by people in their environment including family, friends and others. They synthesize the grammar of the language as they move through the natural development process. It is believed that the LAD is strong during early childhood, but weakens once the critical period for learning a language has passed, and for this reason, adults have difficulties in learning new languages (Conteh-Morgan 2002). Chomsky's theory implies that both first and second language learners need large amounts of contextualized meaningful input in order to acquire language. Learners who experience face-to-face conversation in a natural setting acquire language more quickly and more successfully than those exposed to exclusively to exercises that focus on structure alone (Shrum & Glisan 2000). Chomsky's theory implies that teaching of a second language should be introduced to young children while the LAD is still strong and active. Children are capable of learning any language and social interaction should be provided to allow to opportunities for learners to interact meaningfully with others and get as much input as possible.

### *Krashen's Input Hypothesis Model*

Krashen's input hypothesis model extends' Vygotsky's and Chomsky's theories. His monitor model put forward five hypotheses. These are: (a) the acquisition-learning hypothesis, (b) the natural order hypothesis, (c) the input hypothesis, (d) the monitor hypothesis, and (e) the affective filter hypothesis. First, the acquisition-learning hypothesis describes the difference between the natural subconscious in acquiring a primary language and the conscious learning of a second language that usually occurs in schools. Secondly is the natural order hypothesis. It claims that grammatical structures are acquired in a conventional order, implying that certain understandings of language are usually acquired before others (Crawford, 2003). This is

evidenced in the similarity of the order in which first and second languages are acquired, although not identical. Krashen does not state whether or not this sequencing element has implications for teaching and learning of a second language. Similar to Vygotsky's ZPD, Krashen's third hypothesis is the input hypothesis, which suggests that language acquisition is possible when the learner gets comprehensible input at a slightly higher level than what the child already understands. Grammatical structures are a part of this input, just as infants acquire their primary language in the natural setting (Conteh-Morgan, 2002). Krashen further explains that input must be built and be negotiated in relation to what the learner already knows for the purpose of supporting the construction of meaning related to the input. Fourth is the monitor hypothesis, which describes how the learner makes corrections in language during the processes of speaking or writing In order for learners to make these corrections, there must be adequate time, knowledge of grammatical form and understandings of the rules being applied (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Fifth, the affective filter hypothesis suggests that language learning is most likely to be successful if it occurs in a secure environment that is free from anxiety, where error correction is minimized and where encouragement is maximized.

Although Krashen's theories have been criticized for their lack of empirical evidence, they are known and respected for their strong implications for classroom learning, such as minimizing error correction because the goal is language acquisition. Consequently, some researchers have extended Krashen's ideas and have suggested that simplifying and modifying input to the level of the learners and allowing them to make connections between form and meaning. This instructional goal can be realized by focusing on how learners perceive and process input through presenting one concept at a time, keeping meaning in focus, moving from sentence to connected discourse, using both oral and written input, having the learner actively involved with utilizing input, and keeping learner processing strategies in mind (Shrum & Glisan, 2000).

### *Implications of the Language Theories for Classroom Teaching*

Vygotsky's, Chomsky's and Krashen's theories have several overall implications concerning classroom second language learning. Across all of these theories, there is the socio-cultural perspective on language instruction suggesting that learners must have ample opportunities to interact meaningfully with others while making use of the second language. The

teacher should provide understandable input in the target language, create an interactive environment that models and presents a variety of social, linguistic, and cognitive tools for structuring and interpreting participation in talk, and providing opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning in the target language which is socially constructed and context-dependent. This can be accomplished by facilitating collaboration between students and teachers, students and published authors, writers and readers, and among students themselves (Newman, 1985). These interactions provide chances for learners to interact communicatively with one another in the target language through conversations and tasks that are purposeful and meaningful to the learner. Teachers should provide a non-threatening environment that encourages self-expression to facilitate language learning (Hadley, 2001). The target language has to be used as naturally as possible so that learners can deal with it the same way they have already learned to process their first language – that is, approaching language learning as a whole rather than fragmenting the process. Lastly, teachers should understand the role that children's first languages play in the process of acquiring and learning a second language.

**The Role of First Language in Learning and Acquiring Another Language**

In normal circumstances, children learn well in their first language (McGee & Richgels, 2000). Carrasquillo and Hedley (1993) suggest that learners are more successful academically when they are first encouraged to develop concepts and literacy in their native language. Several reasons account for this suggestion. First, the native language forms primary identity and confidence for learners. Hence, teachers should encourage children to value their native language and heritage (Smith, 1998). Further, Smith asserts, "it is possible to learn more than one language, more than one dialect and particular ways of viewing the world" (p.21). Secondly, when learners develop critical thinking skills, build cognitive and affective domains and value their local language experiences and cultures, they lay groundwork for the expansion of their identities to include their role in the larger national and international context (Young, 2002). Thirdly, students have the ability to transfer universal language strategies and knowledge from the first language to a new language, and this transferability plays a critical role in bilingual instruction. Fourthly, developing a new language is a slow process; hence, learners need their native language while they are making the transition to the second language. It is suggested that

17

this transition process can enhance and contribute to higher levels of achievement in the second language (Carrasquillo & Hedley, 1993). Fifthly, children's mastery of mother tongue language makes them feel confident in learning another language because the first language can be used to clarify or give instructions wherever necessary. Lastly, reading and writing literacy skills are initially gained in the language with which the children are most comfortable (Carrasquillo & Hedley, 1993).

On the other hand, mother tongue can also interfere with the learning of another language, especially when the languages have different linguistic systems. For example, Chichewa, the national language of Malawi, has some linguistic features that are quite different from English and that may interfere with the learning of English. These characteristics include consistent vowel sounds and syllable patterns, the fact that all the vowels are 'lax,' and the fact that all syllables follow the CV (consonant; vowel); CCV; VCV structure. All the syllables end with a vowel (open syllables), while English has short and long vowels and both open and closed syllable patterns. A Chichewa speaker may find it difficult to pronounce an English word with closed syllables like "cry," and pronounce this word like /kah/lau/ye/.

Although Chichewa, Malawi's national language is identified as the native language, with English language as the official language of the country and second language for students, not all the children come from Chichewa-speaking backgrounds. As already mentioned, Malawi is a multilingual country where there are approximately thirteen main languages. Therefore, to some children, English is the third language. Such children are at a disadvantage in the English language classes because they have to contend with learning two languages at the same time, thus Chichewa and English. This problem is complicated by the fact that even the teachers themselves are not multilingual. This study's focus is on Chichewa native speakers who are attempting to learn English as a second language. Nevertheless, whatever the second target language might be, it is believed that an integrative approach to learning that particular language is very effective.

Existing research on integrative approaches to language learning has shown positive student results, despite the lack of detailed studies that explain how integration works in language learning (Gavelek et al., 1999). Additionally, although there are so many advocacies for integrating language acquisition instruction, there is no stronger theoretical base as to when and how to integrate the curriculum. "The real difficulty with the word integration is the

multiplicity of interrelated meanings which permits its use in reference to many and differing situations but which may also result in ambiguity that interferes with a reasoned discussion," (Gavelek et al., 1999, p.3). Second language learning is characterized by simultaneous development of all of the literacy skills, including speaking, listening, reading and writing, and this implies the value of integration of language skills (Cooper, 1993). This paper approaches integration from a language arts perspective. The language arts are speaking, listening, reading and writing (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Next, I discuss the notion of integrated literacy approaches and their implications for learning a second language.

## Integrated Literacy Approaches

First, it would be appropriate to attempt to define the two terms, " integrate" and "literacy." According to the American Oxford dictionary and Thesaurus (1996), the term "integrate" means to (a) combine parts into a whole; (b) complete an imperfect thing by the addition of parts, to unify, coordinate, put together. Integration in education has three major purposes, to make learning authentic, meaningful and efficient. First, learning can be made authentic when it is paralleled with real world tasks. Secondly, learning can be made meaningful in the sense that information or knowledge construction is an integrative process, and rarely is information used to answer isolated problems. Lastly, integration makes learning efficient as it offers hope for extensive curriculum coverage (Gavelek et al., 1999).

Literacy has complex connotations in everyday life and is not easy to define (DiPardo, 2003). Smith (1998) states that literacy is defined by who you are and you in turn, are defined by literacy. Language is at the hub of literacy development, and the ability to read and write is considered to be literacy (McGee & Richgels, 2000). Reading and writing is the major focus in literacy development in primary schools. According to Cooper (1993), literacy is the ability to effectively use all the language arts of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Utilizing the definitions of the two terms, integration and literacy, it might be assumed that integrated literacy approach in learning a language conceptually mean coordination of various language and learning skills, but that is not the case. Integrated literacy approaches to learning take many forms, some of which are controversial. This is due to lack of guiding theories on integration.

19

For the purpose of this study, I will provide a description of three aspects of integration. First, integration suggests that reading; writing, speaking, listening and thinking are developed together simultaneously; hence, should not be taught as separate topics (Cooper, 1993). For example, students can learn about reading and writing while listening; they learn about writing from reading and gain insights about reading from writing (Newman, 1985).

Secondly, integration mean that language and literacy are functional tools, rather than curricular entities to be studied or mastered in their own right; hence, school subjects are seen as a basis for integration (Gavelek et al., 1999). In traditional classrooms, subjects or content knowledge is isolated into disciplines that do not really promote broad understandings and interrelationships and learning usually takes place through one avenue – the textbook. Integrative approaches require that teachers encourage learners in becoming content literate by making connections between the content they teach and language processes that students need in order to make learning meaningful. The major rationale for the idea of subject integration is that in real life situations or environments, people use the information and knowledge heuristically. Therefore children's lessons should be approached such that they see the relationships between what they learn in school with what happens in real life situations.

Making content accessible for English language learners has several advantages. Language used in the content areas helps students to discover, organize, retrieve, and elaborate upon what they are learning (Vacca, 2000). A content-based approach enhances attainment of advanced levels of second language proficiency because the curriculum becomes the vehicle for teaching language skills. Students learn in language rather than about language. Content-based instruction allows the students to blend information from various sources of the curriculum (Hernandez, 2003). In addition, learners have an opportunity to learn the structures of English language that apply to specific disciplines. Students see and hear real language that serves a purpose (Shrum & Glisan, 2000).

The modern understanding of literacy learning as presented by the schema theory argues that individuals develop cognitive structures of knowledge called schema as they experience the world. As schemata develop and expand, meaning is constructed through drawing from various schemata and building connections between them (Cooper, 1993). Constructivists, who assume that all knowledge is constructed from previous knowledge, support this theory. There is need for teachers to pay attention to what learners bring to the subject matter because there are often

incomplete understandings, false beliefs and immature interpretations that may need to be developed to more mature perceptions (Bransford et al., 2000). Schema theories imply that students make meaning within context and that ideas should not be fragmented and taught in isolation. In real life situations, language, mathematical or social studies concepts are interactive processes that cannot be separated.  For that reason, students in the classroom should also see how these ideas operate in their everyday discourse. In addition, in situations where there are no English speaking models nor adequate books, like Malawi, merging content instruction with English language development provides input to maximize interaction with the language and shortens the amount of time devoted to the second language learning. Content-based language instruction provides a background for English language learners to negotiate meaning in their daily instructional interactions.

Thirdly, the concept of integrated literacy will also entail merging learning beyond the school to the home and the community. Students need to experience continuity between home and school literacy practices so that they understand literacy as part of their cultural practices. Culture in this sense refers to a collection of lived experiences rather than a collection of personality traits or folk celebrations. However, this study will focus on reading and writing as the aspects of integration. Next, I discuss why reading and writing will be the focus of this study as regards integrating the language arts.

## Why Reading and Writing

As already mentioned above, though all the language arts of reading, speaking writing and listening develop simultaneously, much of the focus of this study will be on reading and writing for several reasons. First and foremost, there is a need is to limit the scope of the study. The second reason is that the ultimate goal of schooling is to create skillful readers and writers (Heller, 1995). Third, in second language classrooms, reading and writing provide a wide opportunity in which students can interact with the target language, hence providing for active engagement. Reading and writing also provide students with opportunities to get involved with language that is somewhat more mature than what they currently use (Farris, 2001). It is believed that children learn more words quickly and incidentally through repeated exposure during reading and writing than through direct instruction. Creative writing naturally extends the

21

concepts underlying the new words that ultimately become a permanent part of reading and writing (Heller, 1995).

Flood and Lapp (1987) reported a synthesis of research on reading and writing relationships, finding that reading has influence on writing and vice versa; hence, they concluded that the two are cyclical and equally facilitative units that support one another. Flood and Lapp found that better writers tended to be better readers; better writers tended to read more than poor writers, and better writers tended to produce more syntactically mature writing than poor readers. Both reading and writing are manifestations of cognitive and linguistic development. Readers and writers create meaning by building the relationship between the text and what they know and believe. Schema theory holds that prior knowledge of the world enables readers to construct meaning from print by reconstructing the author's message and connecting with schemata present in memory. Writers, on the other hand, compose and construct meaningful information from schemata and other information into communicative ideas through text.

Children learn to read and write by engaging in reading and writing. Through wide reading experiences, most children become good readers in the same way they master oral language. Authors provide a wider scope of literacy and freedom of imagination (Ohanian, 2001). Learning to read and write should come as naturally as language learning. Students write more and think at deeper levels when they are engaged in low-stakes writing assignments, because the focus is on exploration of ideas rather than clarity of presentation. It allows students to connect what they know to what they are studying, and move beyond low-level recall level of information. Low-stakes writing also allows students to interact personally with ideas and information without the pressure of producing well-polished finished work. Examples of low-stake writing are informal writings such as journals, and other non-graded and non-threatening writing activities, including unfinished writings (McLaughlin & Vogt, 2000). Allowing students to choose what they want to read or write about boosts their interest and allows them to construct new knowledge upon what they already know. Constructing new knowledge upon what the learner already knows is a constructivist-based philosophy that is founded on the new science of learning. When the learners construct knowledge from their previous knowledge, they involved in an active learning process and this is referred to as learner-centered learning (Bransford et al., 2000).

Therefore, reading and writing are closely related cognitive activities that are best taught using active or learner-centered processes. Learners should participate actively in language literacy skills of reading and writing (Dipardo, 2003). Reading and writing are vehicles for learning English as a second language. For this reason, active engagement is an essential component of learner-centered, integrated approaches to literacy learning. Teachers are therefore, challenged to engage learners actively as they attempt to learn English.

## Engaging Children in Active Learning

Active learning emphasizes the importance of supporting students in taking control of their own learning (Bransford et al., 2000). Active learning is referred to as being learner-centered, a concept based on constructivist and motivational theory. The constructivists emphasize meaning making that is built upon what the learner already knows while negotiating with new ideas (Crawford, 2003). The prior knowledge, skills, beliefs, and concepts the students bring to the learning environment significantly influence what they notice about the environment and how they organize and interpret it. Consequently, "it affect their abilities to remember, reason, solve problems and acquire knew knowledge" (Bransford et al., 2000, p. 10).

A related concept, motivational theory, was developed from the expectancy-value theory, which maintains that the strength of motivation is determined jointly by learner's expectancy for success and the incentive value of the objective. "It is assumed that no effort will be invested in learning activity if either factors are missing entirely" (Hootstein, 1994, p. 476). Motivation is believed to be the most prominent factor affecting the learning of a new language, and at the same time, it is a complicated issue in second language acquisition research. Researchers have not yet identified specific motivational factors that point to learning a new language (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). However, the constructivist view of learning that places children as controllers of their own learning can be considered to be a motivating factor. The constructive paradigm is also linked with the communicative approach to second-language acquisition, like the ZPD theory that emphasizes the social dimension of learning and the scaffolding which grows out of cooperative or interactive learning with teachers, parents, siblings and other care givers. Scaffolding is a gradual release of responsibility in problem-solving, through the use of scaffolding strategies such as questioning, prompts, rephrasing, illustrations, graphic organizers,

demonstrations, dramatization, gestures and comprehension monitoring. These strategies sustain active participation in learning (Crawford, 2003). In addition, constructivists view learning as a self-regulated process of resolving inner cognitive conflicts that often become apparent through concrete experiences, collaborative discussion, and reflection. It involves learners' abilities to predict their performances on various tasks, promotes inquiry-based learning and encourages student creativity, creative and critical thinking and motivation (Vacca, 2000).

Suggestions for teachers to engage children in active learning are first to understand that children need to be in control of their own learning, and that the teacher's role is facilitation. For this reason, teachers should assist children in the development of metacognition strategies. Metacognition includes the ability to predict one's performance on various tasks (Bransford et al., 2000).  Secondly, children should actively engaged in learning tasks that they find to be interesting and engaging.  Tasks of this kind require a focus on the whole child; that is, taking into consideration the affective, physical, social and cognitive needs of each child (Hootstein, 1994). As Krashen stated in the "Affective Filter Hypothesis," acquisition of a second language can only occur in an emotionally secure environment that allows students to take risks in attempting to speak the new language without fear of embarrassment or humiliation (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Thirdly, when children see the connection between what they are learning with life outside the school, they are motivated to be actively engaged. In addition, cooperative language learning is expected to produce active student participation, although there are no studies to back this proposition. There are no easy answers for engaging students to learn actively apart from the teacher's creativity in using contextually appropriate methodology (Hootstein, 1994). In addition, it should be noted that active engagement should not only apply to observable behaviors; it is a simultaneous operation of two mechanisms: interpersonal verbal and intrapersonal mental processes (Gunter, Estes, & Schwab, 2003).

Despite the advantages of integrative approaches to language learning Pollard (2001) and Vacca et al. (2000) cautions about the tendency to go to extremes in using one approach during teaching and learning. They assert that no one approach will suffice the needs of all learners and that teachers should be encouraged to use different philosophical and theoretical beliefs in well-informed, dynamic and creative ways. For example, the direct instruction model, though it has shortcomings, is effective when students need a demonstration before practicing an activity (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). For instance, in Malawi, students need to be introduced to English

words and pronunciations before they can actually start discovering other aspects of this language; hence teachers use more traditional approaches to instruction. Teachers' ability to balance the use of approaches in various learning situations is very important. The ability to balance instructional approaches is somewhat dependent upon how teachers are taught in their teacher education programs. The way teachers learn to teach has direct implications for how they will teach children in the classroom. For example, currently, teachers in Malawi learn to teach based on traditional teacher-centered approaches, and as such, it is not surprising to find that the traditional teacher-centered approaches dominate in the teaching of English in primary classes (Stuart & Kunje, 2000). Next, the paper examines teacher learning.

## Teacher Learning

Learning to teach is a multifaceted process that cannot be dealt with fully in this paper; therefore, only a few aspects are discussed for the sake of this study, including an overall description of learning to teach, why teachers should continue to learn after attending the initial teacher education, and how they should actually learn. Learning to teach is a continuous life-long process that should be characterized by continuous coordinated activities (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Bransford et al., 2000). Learning to teach is analogous to a seed that is planted, germinates, gradually grows and matures, and finally produces fruits in its lifetime through continuous nourishment. Initial teacher education is like the seed that is planted, germinates and matures. Improved teaching practices result in the fruit the teacher produce during a lifetime in the teaching profession, and continued learning is the nourishment required through out this growth process. Steffy, Michael, Wolfe, Pasch & Enz (2000) presented learning to teach in a six stage developmental model that is driven by the mechanism of reflection and renewal. The model is represented as follows:

**Novice >> Apprentice >> Professional >> Expert >> Distinguished >> Emeritus** (p. 5)

Borko and Putman (1986) similarly classified teacher development in five stages as follows:

**Novice >> Advanced Beginner >> Competent >> Proficient >> Expert** (p. 682).

In this study, I was particularly interested in working with an expert teacher. Expert teachers by description are believed to be those who have achieved high professional standards, are competent, confident, facilitators of learning, and nurturers of growth and development and

their students, regardless of their backgrounds or ability levels (Griffin, 1999). Students feel safe learning in the learning environments these teachers create. At this level, expert teachers have developed routines and repertoires about teaching that make their jobs fluid and automatic. They demonstrate expertise in class management and in conducting smooth effective lessons (Bransford et al., 2000). Expertise plays an important role in teaching, as in any profession, because it symbolizes competence of high standards as desired in a particular profession. Experts are able to reflect on their practices and facilitate growth and change in both themselves and their students. The process of developing into an expert teacher is considered to signify professional development or continuous learning. Griffin (1999) argues that teacher preparation and growth as professionals is a matter of serious consequence that cannot be left to chance, but should be a deliberate initiative.

### Why Should Teachers Continue to Learn?

Continued teacher learning connotes professional development. It is assumed the learning that takes place after the initial teacher education and its aim is to continually improve teacher practices with a belief that this ultimately improves learning in the classroom (Taylor, 1996). As already stated above Griffin (1999) argues that continued teacher learning for professional development should be a deliberate initiative, several reasons account for this. First, the world is experiencing massive increase in knowledge, technology, advances in research and rapid change in social conditions that naturally have implications for teacher practice and the school curriculum (Williams & Bolam, 1993). One of the components of the school curriculum is to satisfy the needs of the society; therefore, schools have to be in tune with changing societal needs. Therefore, it is natural for the life of a teacher to be one of continual growth and development (Arhar, Holly & Kasten 2001) in order to keep abreast of current knowledge of excellence in teaching. For that reason, initial teacher education, no matter how long or excellent it may be, does not suffice to fulfill all of a teacher's professional life needs (Williams & Bolam, 1993). Secondly, as teachers practice, they need to question their familiar territory, such as asking about where ideas about their profession come from. Why do they do things the way they do them? And, is there is a better way to do them? Teachers should also be asking questions about who makes the policies, and how such decisions are reached, and what possibilities were entertained before making various decisions (Arhar et al., 2001). In attempting to answer such

questions, teachers are learning and this can be a basis for continued learning and improved teaching in the classroom. Thirdly, if teachers continue to learn, but in a collaborative way, they will simultaneously share knowledge and develop common knowledge and skills that lead to professional culture and strategies for combating common challenges which exist because of teaching in isolation (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Lastly, teachers who receive a small amount of initial training (like those in Malawi) and are then put into a complex job with little formal help available should be assisted in further development through continued learning. Teachers can develop themselves and others can help them to develop (Joyce & Showers, 1998). Joyce and Showers further maintain that there is research-based evidence demonstrating that all teachers are capable of learning the most powerful and complex teaching strategies if teacher development activities are properly designed.

The idea of continuous learning for teachers is very convincing in theory, but in practice it has been more difficult to implement when compared to its counterpart, pre-service education. In many cases, professional development activities are characterized by uncoordinated efforts that do not resonate with teacher's needs (Bransford et al., 2000). There is need to put in place alternative methods of professional development that will be more effective in meeting teacher needs. Professional development might be effective if there is adequate research that informs practice, comprehensive implementation policies, modes of continuous assessment, and evaluation procedures (Joyce & Showers, 1998). Currently, ad hoc, fragmented programs that mostly end in suspense in terms of effectiveness in practice and that are difficult to evaluate, characterize professional development activities (Williams & Bolam, 1993). Therefore, creating opportunities for a continuum of coordinated efforts for teacher learning beginning during pre-service education and continuing to support professional growth over the career of a teacher is a major challenge in teacher education (Bransford et al., 2000). Many professional development activities lack coordination and do not serve the intended purpose (Bransford, et al., 2000).

In Malawi, the concept of professional development is not well conceived. To many teachers, professional development means attending courses away from the school, and there is no system for examining the outcomes of such courses. Further, the day-to-day professional development activities that happen at the school are not recognized by teachers, yet they are the ones believed to be the most effective mode of professional development (Pollard, 2001). This implies a need to address the question of how teachers should learn.

### *How Should Teachers Learn?*

The process of learning is the same in all-learning situations, whether one is considering children in the schools or teachers in education programs (Bransford et al., 2000). What the learner already knows effects how new knowledge will be learned. This is founded in constructivism, which holds that teachers begin the learning process with what they already know, and move on to gain new knowledge by connecting new information to prior knowledge and engaging in reflection in practice.

Reflection in practice is a purposeful constructivist perspective based on recent research findings that have illuminated how to improve the learning of teachers (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Reflection in practice refers to teacher consideration and reconsideration of their experiences with tasks for the purpose of developing in depth understandings of their own practices and how they can improve to better meet the needs of students. Reflection in practice includes cognitive strategies or ways of thinking that are essential to the practice of teaching, and the ability to question, examine, evaluate and criticize one's practices (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Constructivist perspectives regard learning as a constructive and iterative process in which the learner interprets events based on existing knowledge, beliefs and dispositions. New teachers bring knowledge and images about teaching that have been accumulated over time as students to the teaching profession. These dispositions are fixed and powerful, and cannot be easily altered by teacher education programs. Yet, most preservice teacher perceptions about the teaching profession are not compatible with instructional approaches as advocated by current teacher education programs. In addition, these dispositions may cause new teachers not to take initial teacher education seriously because they feel they already know how to teach and consequently see no need for developing new understandings of teaching and learning. This is a challenge to teacher educators because, if they cannot succeed in assisting the teachers in reflecting upon and dealing with their pre-requisite knowledge and beliefs, initial teacher education and consequently professional development, can become invalid. Teacher educators should help developing teachers reflect on their existing beliefs and knowledge so that preservice teachers can see the foundation for building upon the new knowledge and the irrelevance of their apprenticeship of observation (Labaree, 2000). Teachers cannot give what they don't have; they have to experience life as learners themselves before they can reflect on themselves as teachers (McIntyre & Byrd,

2000). Reflection in practice should involve identification of the central activities of teaching, such as creating materials that support student knowledge construction and active engagement in learning. For example, preservice teachers can be engaged in studying and analyzing cases of teaching and real artifacts, records, moments, events, and classroom tasks (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

Furthermore, reflection in practice helps teachers to understand what they are learning. Understanding (other than memorizing a set of fixed procedures) influences successful application of what has been learnt in teacher education (Bransford et al., 2000). It is important for educators to help teachers understand the theoretical and practical sides of teaching, as opposed to assuming that what teachers will be able to learn out of context and automatically transfer to classroom practice (Pollard, 2001; Griffin, 1999) because the implication of such assumptions is that teachers will give up easily and revert to more traditional practices that are influenced by traditions, apprenticeship of observation, habits, and authority that have institutional definitions and expectations (Thomas et al. 2000). Ball & Cohen (1999) also suggests that the role of teacher educators must go beyond preparing teachers in initial teacher education and involve actively working with them in their practice to enhance teaching in order to improve learning in schools.

**Summary**

This chapter included a review of literature related to the ideas that formed the foundation of this study, which was designed to answer the following question. "How does a teacher acting as a co-researcher come to understand and implement integrated literacy approaches in an English class in Malawi?" I first examined the traditional teacher-centered approaches that currently dominate teaching practices in Malawi English classes. Then I examined the theories of second language learning and the implications these theories have for learning in the classroom, in this case English as a second language. Next, I reviewed concepts of integrated literacy approaches and how they relate to second language learning in the classroom. Finally, I briefly explored how teachers learn to teach.

# CHAPTER 3
# METHODOLOGY

To answer the question, "How does a teacher acting as a co-researcher come to understand integrated literacy approaches in an English classroom in Malawi?" a collaborative action research study was carried out with one teacher, resulting in a case study of that teacher's learning process. In the research literature, there are many definitions of action research, but for the sake of this study, only three definitions were highlighted. First, Arhar et al., (2001) defined action research as a type of applied qualitative research that is action-oriented and combines knowledge, practice and development, based on a problem-solving approach to improve social conditions and process of living in a real world. Second, Shannon (1990) defined action research as "inquiry that applies scientific thinking to real life problems, as opposed to teachers' subjective judgments that are based on folklore" (p. 143-144). This study involved a specific case, and Merriam (2001) defined a qualitative case study as an "intensive, holistic, descriptive analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 27). The problem under study qualified as a case because the boundaries were clearly defined as "a teacher" in the process of understanding and implementing integrated literacy approaches. The classroom provided the context for the implementation aspect. Merriam (2001) stated that case studies are suitable for situations in which it is impossible to separate cases from their context.

The nature of the research question was the major reason for selecting this action research design (Shannon, 1990). Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) support the idea that researchers should make informed judgments on different research designs based on the nature of their questions rather than depending upon preferences for certain methods. The characteristics of action research design were compatible with the required processes of the study. Action research is a practicable, powerful form of staff development that is professionally exciting and relevant when conducted collaboratively (Burns, 1999). Further, action research (a) uses a primarily inductive research process that focuses on insight, discovery, and interpretations rather than hypothesis testing, (b) it reveals how all component parts work together to form a whole (Merriam 2001), (c) data collection involves the researcher's physical presence in a natural setting, and (d) participant relationships are equal and leadership is not by position but depends

upon expertise and the challenge at hand (Arhar et al., 2001). These characteristics provided favorable requirements for the study.

Action research also has many added advantages in teaching and learning English as second language. For example, bridging scientifically based theoretical approaches to instruction within classrooms continues to be a challenge; therefore action research provides such opportunities to implement and evaluate these scientifically based interventions and strategies in the real classroom. Action research proposes school-based reforms that are likely to change what is taught and how teachers actually instruct students (Sagor, 1992). It provides opportunities for high quality professional development and time to validate intervention in the process of effecting change from teacher centered to learner-centered instructional approaches (Deshler & Schumaker, 1993). It is action oriented and aims at improving the practitioner-researcher as well as teaching practice because it allows the application of problem solving skills to real teaching situations (Arhar et al., 2001). Moreover, teachers examine the ways their students learn and the reasons that learning is sometimes difficult (Patterson, Stansell, & Lee, 1990). Finally, teachers as practitioners get involved in appropriate research that is grounded in the social context of the classroom, and is significant for their daily teaching practice (Burns, 1999).

The following questions guided in data collection and analysis.

- What are the criteria for selecting the context and participants?
- What are the procedures for gaining access to a school?
- How will collaboration with the teacher be initiated?
- What will be the schedule for beginning and ending the study?
- How will I make the teacher a co-researcher?
- How often will I be coming together with the teacher (in and out).
- How do I deal with student resistance if any?
- How do I respond to teacher's questions?
- What will be our roles in this collaborated research?
- What types of lessons will the teacher and I get involved in?
- Will I be writing about myself also?
- After the study, how will I give this teacher support?
- At the end of the study, how will I capture this and incorporate into my program of preparing teachers?

# Context of the Study

The study was conducted in standard six at a public full primary demonstration school in the Blantyre district in the southern region of Malawi. Public schools are by definition government owned schools and these are the commonest in the country. A demonstration school is a public full primary school attached to a teacher training college, and by its name, is used as a demonstration site for student teachers. A full primary school is a school with all primary school classes of standards one to eight. The classes were also classified into three successive sections from lower to higher grades. That is, the infant, junior and senior sections respectively. The infant section was comprised of standards one and two; the junior section consisted of standards three, four and five; and the senior section consisted of standards six, seven and eight. Students in standard one and two studied nine subjects and, as they progressed with the primary course, more subjects were added at different stages. For instance, in standard one, pupils were learning English (Malawi's official Language), Chichewa (Malawi's national language), Mathematics, Music, Social studies, Science and Health Education, Physical Education, Religious Education, and Creative Arts. In standard three, one more subject; Needlecraft was added. After that, Agriculture was added in standard five. Finally, Home Economics was added from standard six, making thirteen subjects in the senior section. However, Chichewa and English languages, apart from being subjects in the curriculum, were also used as alternative mediums of instruction. That is from standards one to four, Chichewa was the medium of instruction, and then from standards five to eight English became the language of instruction. The curriculum was silent on the predicament of children whose mother tongue was not Chichewa, considering that Malawi is a multilingual country with about thirteen local languages (Kayambazinthu, 1998). Therefore, this study assumed that all children were learning English as a second language. It was from this perspective that the co-researcher was identified.

## The Co-researcher

### *Selecting the Co-researcher*

The co-researcher was identified based on purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is used when the researcher selects a sample using set criterion so that the sample will provide

maximum insight and understanding of the study (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002). The selection process did not go well as planned because the suitable candidate did not come from the original planned procedure; instead, an additional procedure was used.

According to the original plan, after seeking permission from the District Education Manager (DEM) of the Blantyre district to access primary schools in the district, I requested that the Primary school Education Advisor (PEA), assist me in identifying five teachers, from which I was going to identify one participant as a co-researcher. The PEA was a professional officer in the DEM's office whose responsibility was supervision and assisting primary school teachers with their professional development activities in an assigned zone. A zone, in this regard, referred to a cluster of about 10 schools within a district. The assumption was that, since the PEA worked closely with the teachers, she would be in a better position to identify the best teachers that matched the selection criteria laid down for the study.

In line with the request, the PEA recommended five names that were ranked in order of priority. The five teachers were from different schools and they comprised of three women and two men. Using semi-structured interview questions as presented in Appendix A, I interviewed the teachers in succession in order of the priority list as given by the PEA. The purpose of the interview was to select the teacher considered the best candidate to become the co-researcher. The first on the list was a woman teacher whom, after being interviewed, did not qualify to be a co-researcher because the interview revealed she was not teaching English and had not done so for the past five years. Moreover, she was not teaching in the preferred classes of standards five, six or seven. Since the PEA had already informed this teacher about the intended study, she was prepared to adjust her subjects and classes to meet the needs of the research but I still turned her down because she by far did not meet the selection criterion for the study and she probably was not going to contribute much due to lack of experience in the subject. The second on the list was another woman that matched with the selection criterion and accepted to participate in the study. However, for three consecutive weeks she did not report for the meetings that I arranged for the two us to do the preliminary arrangements of the study. She kept producing excuses for not attending the meetings; hence, I was forced to keep on postponing the meetings until I gave up on her because I was losing much time in my research schedule. The last three, two men and a woman matched the set criteria and were ready to participate in the study, but they had put a condition that they would require to be financially compensated for participating. All of these

three teachers were also turned down because the Informed Consent Form for participants in Research projects involving human subjects had already stated that there would be no financial compensation for participation. I was compelled to change the strategy for identifying the co-researcher through the PEA and had to do it myself.

Since the DEM's permission letter to access primary schools in Blantyre district was open ended, I took advantage of this and embarked on the search for the co-researcher myself. I searched for the co-researcher at random by calling at other public primary schools and inquiring from other people in the primary school teaching field. In the three schools that I called on directly, the teachers had the same opinion that participation in research study had to be financially compensated for. As the search continued a woman teacher was identified at Kapeni Demonstration primary School through the deputy principal of Blantyre Teachers' Training College. This was the college on which I had, a short while ago, been a member of the staff.

### *Akusi Tekateka Becomes the Co-researcher*

Akusi Tekateka (pseudonym) was selected to be the co-researcher because, through the selection interview, she matched the selection criteria that were set for the study. Appendix B shows the selection criteria. Based on her previous involvement and experiences with other researchers, Akusi was delighted and eager to participate in the research. She was optimistic that she would gain more knowledge from the proposed study. The results of the selection interviews revealed that Akusi was 36 years old, married with four children. She originated from Rumphi, a district in the northern part of Malawi. After secondary school education, Akusi trained as a nurse and worked in hospital for ten years before joining the teaching profession. It was due to marital demands that she was compelled to change from medical to teaching profession. She was trained as a T2 grade teacher in the one-year teacher education program in 1995. In Malawi, student teachers that attained an MSCE (four years of secondary school education) automatically assumed the T2 grade position after completing initial teacher training as compared to those who join teaching with a Junior Certificate of Education (JCE), and who become T3 grade teachers. Akusi started teaching as a qualified teacher in 1996. At the time of research, Akusi had taught for nine years with five years at Kapeni Demonstration School (the venue of the research). During the five years of her teaching at the school, she had consistently taught English alongside other subjects in either standard five or six. At the time of the study, Akusi with other two

teachers, were assigned to teach standard six. She was assigned to teach English, Science, Agriculture and Social studies. The other subjects; Mathematics, Science, Religious Education, Physical Education, Music, Creative Arts and Chichewa were divided among the other two teachers. Finally, Akusi was given the consent form, which she signed after reading it. The next step was to initiate the collaboration with Akusi.

### *Initiating Collaboration with Akusi*

Collaboration, as one of the components that makes up the essence of action research, was a strand that ran throughout the study. I had to deliberately initiate collaboration with Akusi because it never existed in our normal teaching situations. For that reason, the study was done in two phases. The purpose of the first phase was to initiate the collaboration between Akusi and I. This initial collaboration had two parallel purposes: to plan and prepare integration practices of reading and writing before classes began, and to begin creating a mutual working relationship between Akusi and myself in preparation for the actual implementation of the study. Appendix C presents guiding questions that helped to begin the collaboration. The other phase was for the actual implementation of the action research. Appendix D shows the time line for the study.

Although I had envisioned collaboratively sharing integration practices with Akusi in November and December 2003, before the next school term's instruction began, very little was achieved because the process of identifying the co-researcher took much longer than scheduled. Besides, when I finally got Akusi, and due to the short notice she got about the study, she suggested that I should wait for two weeks to allow her fulfill other personal commitments before she could get committed to the study.

However, during the last week of December in two alternate hours, we managed to introduce each other and I communicated the intent, conditions and approaches of the study. We also looked at the schemes that Akusi had already planned for her standard six English class in preparation for the forth-coming first term of the 2004 new academic year, the period of the study. Mtunda & Safuli (1997) define schemes of work as "the interpretation of the syllabus indicating the topics or concepts to be covered and in the order in which they are to be covered every week" (p.18). According to the original plan, we were supposed to plan the English scheme together, but since this was not possible for the reason already mentioned above, we agreed to use the schemes she had prepared. Nevertheless, we examined and discussed the

scheme of work to get an overview of what was planned for the class, and we concluded that integrated literacy approaches were better be incorporated during lesson preparations, since the purpose of the study was not to change the content but rather to adopt integrated literacy approaches. We also agreed that the collaborative integrated activities we failed to complete before the opening of school would be done during lesson preparation and reflection in the first weeks of the study. These activities are included in Appendix E**.**

Significantly, also at this initial collaboration stage, I strived to develop a mutual co-working relationship with Akusi because the power relationship I had feared might occur did become evident. The power relationship was probably a result of the educational systems structure Akusi and I belonged to. In this education setting, the senior person is naively believed to be the owner of knowledge and the junior person is the receiver of that knowledge. I was a teacher educator and senior, while Akusi was a primary school teacher and a junior. According to this structure, I was Akusi's teacher and she automatically was a student. By virtue of this relationship and this mistaken belief, I was also the authority and owner of knowledge and she was the student and therefore the receiver of that knowledge (Freire, 2000). These misconceptions could also be traced to the banking type of education system that people in Malawi experience. In banking education, teachers are more knowledgeable than the learners, and this trend is extended beyond the school.

I explained to Akusi that the study required a complementary relationship between us because there was need to combine our knowledge and experiences in trying to make sense of and understand the phenomena of integrated literacy approaches. That is, she was going to bring her knowledge and experiences with children and the teaching of English as a second language while I brought the idea of integrated literacy in teaching English, from my doctoral studies, to see how the teacher was going to learn these concepts. That meant that each of us was going to lead in activities depending on expertise and the challenge at hand, and not by position. I honestly assured her that the subject under study was new to me as well. In addition, as much as possible, I guarded against using language and actions that portrayed hierarchical power and banking type of education attitudes.

**Procedure for Data Collection**

Interviews, observations and document analysis are the main source of data in a qualitative case study (Creswell, 1998). In this study, four types of qualitative data were collected for the purpose of addressing the question "How does a teacher acting as a co-researcher come to understand and implement integrated literacy approaches in an English classroom in Malawi?" The data included: (a) a semi-structured interview prior to the study and at the end of the study, (b) collaborative lesson planning and lesson reflections between the teacher Akusi, and the researcher, (c) class lesson observation summaries, and (d) a researcher's journal.

### *Semi-structured Interviews*

The first data source included two semi-structured audio-taped interviews that could be considered pre/post interviews. The first interview was conducted prior to the study for the purpose of obtaining a general impression of how Akusi perceived language learning. These pre-interview questions pointed to how Akusi acquired the three languages she spoke, thus two local languages; Chichewa, Tumbuka and English. The other questions focused on her general experiences in teaching and learning English to non-English speakers especially with regard to reading and writing, and in relation to her own experiences of language acquisition. This interview took place in an informal relaxed setting, in the living room at Akusi's residence. The interviews took about thirty minutes.

The second semi-structured interview was completed soon after the end of the study. The purpose was to find out if Akusi had changed her concepts of teaching English after going through the collaborative integrated literacy approaches. For that reason, the interview comprised questions that were similar to the pre-interview questions. This interview was carried out in an office that Akusi and I used for the research activities. This office was lent to us by Blantyre Teachers Training College soon after the beginning of the study. The interview took about an hour and half. (See Appendix F) for the interview questions.

*Cyclic Ongoing Data Collection*

Data were collected in a cyclical manner using an ongoing process. Akusi and I worked continuously for thirteen weeks starting from January 6th. The first two weeks were spent on settling down and getting a general picture of Akusi's English classes. The actual classroom data collection started on January 19th and continued until March 31st 2004. Our work together focused on Standard six English lessons only. We worked and planned together two days each week. On the remaining three days, Akusi worked alone but she discussed her experiences and her reflections on those lessons in our next meetings. The data collected based upon our collaborative work included the lesson planning and lesson reflections sessions, lesson observation summaries, and the researcher's journal. Figure 1 was developed to depict the relationships in this cyclic data collection process. Each of these data sources will be discussed separately, beginning with the lesson planning.

*Lesson Planning*

The second data source was a series of audio-taped collaborative lesson planning sessions that included Akusi and myself. Akusi and I collaboratively picked a lesson from the planned schemes and records of work. As already stated, schemes of work were an outline of sub-teachable topics, for the whole term, prepared by the teacher based on broader topics from the English teaching syllabus and the teachers guide. The teachers' guide portrayed how the lessons should be broken down and specified how the content from the syllabus should be presented in form of lessons. Therefore, the teacher's guide also assisted and directed Akusi when she was writing the schemes of work. The schemes of work act as a storage method from which the teacher picks out topics to be taught in the class. All primary school teachers in Malawi, as required by the Ministry of Education, follow this procedure.

Having picked a lesson from the schemes, we examined the methodological procedures as recommended by the teachers' guide. Teachers in Malawi are expected to base their lesson planning on suggestions from the teacher's guide. This study was designed to be conducted in the context of the existing Malawian system of planned schemes of work and teachers' guides; thus, our goal was to base lesson planning on the teachers' guide and to enhance lessons with integration of reading and writing and active learning. Therefore, for each lesson, the teachers' guide was examined to establish whether it contained reading and writing activities as required
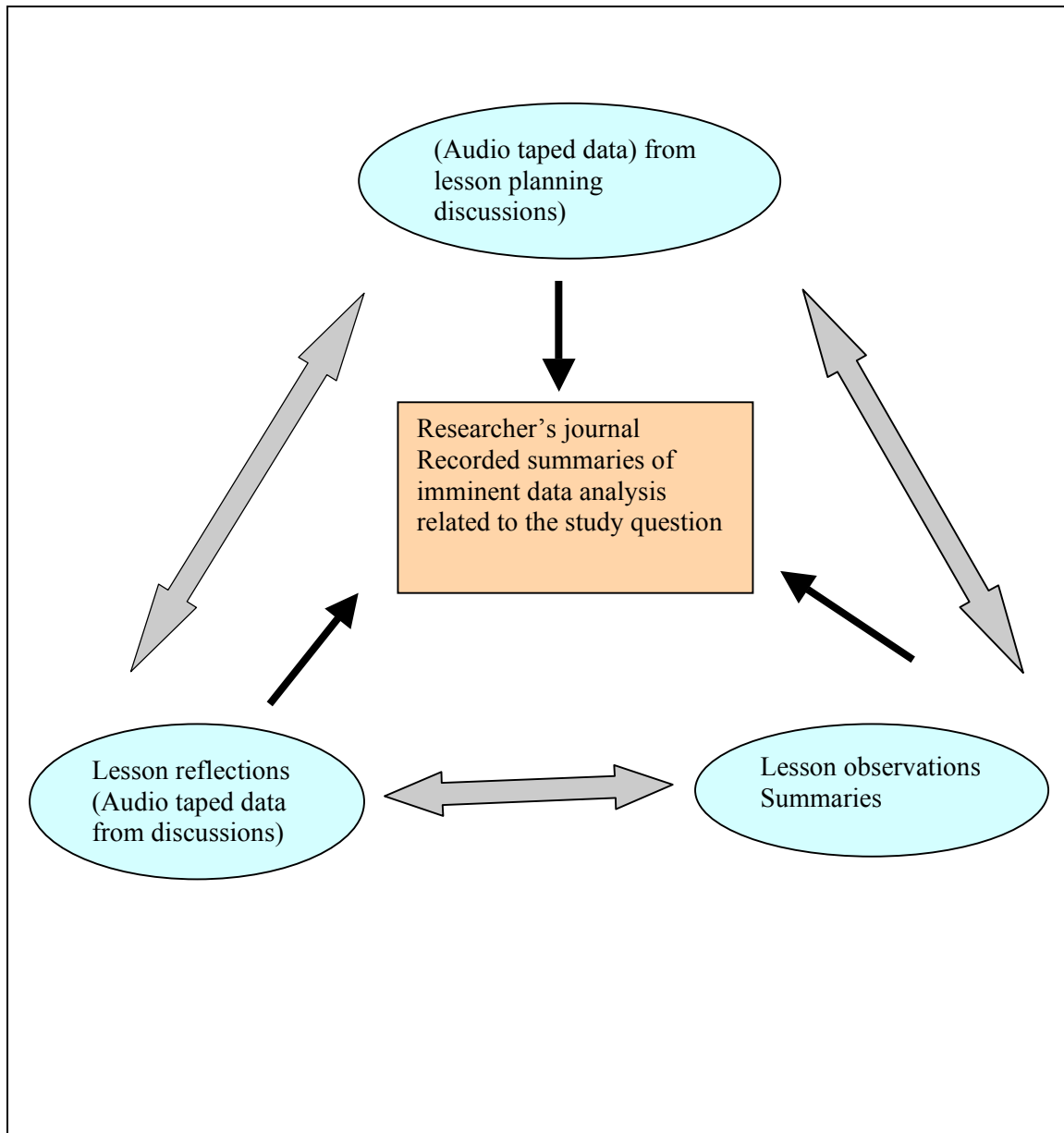
**Figure 1. The Cyclic Data Collection Process**

by principles of integrated literacy approaches. We also considered the recommended methodologies of the teachers' guide for the purpose of establishing the degree to which the students would be actively engaged in the suggested lesson. Then Akusi and I would decide how to incorporate these integrated literacy concepts of reading, writing. We also thought of activities and techniques that would encourage the children to be active participants in the lesson. Active learning emphasizes the importance of helping people to take control of their own learning (Bransford et al., 2000). In the process of scrutinizing lessons in the teacher's guide, we were also making decisions on how to include the types of reading and writing and active engagement that would help us practice the integrated literacy approaches. I observed that reading in the teacher's guide was restricted to the English curriculum textbooks, with teacher directed paragraphs to be read in particular lessons. Alternatively, writing was a means of answering comprehension questions and was done seldomly.

We planned that at the beginning of learning with the integrated literacy approaches, children would be guided by the teacher to read and write what they wanted, with the teacher providing a variety of reading materials. This enabled the learners to negotiate what they know with what they didn't know as they developed the literacy skills of reading and writing in the foreign language. In language classrooms, reading and writing provide a wide opportunity from which students can interact with the target language (Farris, 2001). It is also believed that children appear to learn more words quickly and incidentally through repeated exposure during reading and writing than through direct instruction and further, the ultimate goal of schooling is to create skillful readers and writers (Heller, 1995).

To provide a continuous writing activity, I agreed with Akusi that we modify a bit the structure of the English lesson as stipulated by the teacher's guide, so that the lessons could accommodate journal writing. This was the aural practice section. Almost every English lesson in the teacher's guide was introduced by a section of oral drills. In these drills, the teacher helped the children to memorize and practice speaking a conversation. Therefore, journal writing replaced oral practice drills for the whole period of this study. After we finished examining the lesson and agreed on how to present it in the class, it was Akusi's responsibility to write a lesson plan to guide teaching the following day. In the plan, Akusi made an outline of how she was going to introduce, develop, and conclude the lesson. I only wrote the lesson plan twice when I

had volunteered to teach and Akusi was the observer. Furthermore, during the planning time, we made decisions about what our roles would be during lesson presentation. For example, I was performing two roles of mainly a non-participant and moderately a participant observer. A non-participant observer is the one who is a complete observer while a participant observer participates in the tasks being researched. In some lessons, I was a non-participant observer, while in others I was a participant observer. In other lessons, I was either a participant observer or non-participant observer during certain segments of the lesson. However, Akusi did almost all the teaching, and she was encouraged at any time to ask questions about anything with regard to what we were implementing. Sometimes, we made agreements as to what aspect of the integrated literacy to emphasize. For instance, in some lessons, the focus of observation could be on reading or writing, or both, or active engagement. The purpose of this focus was usually for clarifying or developing more on that particular concept. For example, when Akusi and I differed on the meaning of pupil active participation, the next lesson observation focused on observing what the children did in reading or writing. Then later, during lesson reflection, we discussed the children's participation in the plan for active engagement.

Finally, in the planning sessions, Akusi and I practiced integrated literacy activities that we needed to understand before implementing them in the classroom. For example, in journal writing, I would suggest to Akusi that we make our own journal entries so that we would experience what we asked our students to do. Then I would explain more aspects of journal writing, like why we were doing it and why we should ask the students to do it, why it was called an unstructured journal and why we started with unstructured journals.

We discussed and made plans for the next lesson after Akusi had dismissed the children at 1.00 pm. On average, we had one and half-hours to reflect and plan for the next lesson. As the study was advancing, planning time was reduced to less than one and half-hours. This was probably because Akusi and I had mastered most of the concepts. Lesson reflection and planning were inseparable because what transpired in the last lesson reflection usually determined what was going to happen in the next lesson. We planned for two lessons in a week because we collaboratively worked together twice in the first four periods of the week. Then Akusi did the other four English lessons single handedly.

*Lesson Observations*

Lesson Observation Summaries were another source of data. Out of the 22 lessons of the study, I conducted 16 observations from January, 19th to 31st March 2004 in standard 6 during English lesson presentations. Each observation lasted for approximately 30 minutes, although the lessons took much longer than 30 minutes. Akusi and I had made a special arrangement on the timetable so that at least two English periods on the timetable should follow each other (because the 30-minute period was not enough to organize and practice integrated literacy approaches with a large class). Hence, a lesson usually lasted 45 minutes to one hour. During the first two weeks of the study, from January 06th - 16th, I made four informal observations in order to develop an understanding of the general setting for the study. I observed the physical arrangement of the classroom, typical English lessons, the teacher and students, and interactions between these participants. These first impressions were recorded in the researcher's journal, and no formal lesson observation summaries were recorded at this time.

Data collection began on 19th January, in the third week of the study. During the first formal observation, I recorded everything that was happening in the lesson in order establish a starting point. For example, I observed that the question and answer method, the teacher's marking and grading students' work, and the pupils' seating plan were very noticeable in the lessons. I was particularly aware of these aspects of the lessons, probably because I had acquired knowledge about active participation and was reflecting in my mind about active participation and what was happening in the classroom. Hence, this gave me a starting point for discussions with Akusi by asking such questions as "why do you check, mark and grade pupils' work?" "What happens to the pupils' work which you failed to mark and grade because of time?" "Given enough time, were you going to mark and grade all the 78 notebooks?"

As the observations progressed, I wrote lesson observation summaries because Akusi and I planned the lessons together; therefore, I had an idea of what was going to happen in the lesson and did not need to record each and every thing. For that reason, I focused more on how the teacher explained activities and what the children said and did in response. Appendix G shows some of the observation guidelines for lesson observations. In the two lessons that I taught, I did not take any notes. Instead, I depended on memory and on Akusi's feedback when we had the lesson reflection together.

I observed the lessons as a researcher participant. Merriam (2001) defines participant researcher as "one who participates in a social situation but is personally only partially involved, so that he can function as a researcher" (p.102). Apart from the two lessons I taught, I regularly helped with routine matters like organizing and supervising class activities. We sometimes talked or asked each other questions in relation to what was happening in the lesson, even while the lesson was in progress. Nevertheless, to the greatest degree possible, I tried to assume a low profile during these class interactions. After the lesson observation, the next stage was lesson reflection.

### *Lesson Reflection*

Audio-taped lesson reflection discussions were the other source of data. Akusi and I met after she had finished teaching for the day for an audio-taped lesson reflection of each class session. Ball & Cohen (1999) describe reflection as the ability to question, examine, evaluate and criticize ones practices. The lesson reflection sessions were designed to provide opportunities for us to engage in collaborative questioning, examination of what occurred during the lesson, and evaluation and criticism of the success of the lesson.

Akusi and I reflected on each lesson by first reviewing the lesson plan's specific objectives and discussing the degree to which they had been achieved. The discussions included conversations about issues related to the teaching of English as a second language. In addition, a major focus of the reflective sessions was on the strengths and weaknesses observed in how Akusi involved students in reading and writing activities. Then we made suggestions on how to make improvements based on our collaborative understandings of the strengths and weaknesses we identified. For example, in one of the lessons, Akusi told the students to write whatever they wanted in their journal notebooks for five minutes. This turned out to be strength in the lesson because every child was involved in the writing, denoting both engagement in writing and active participation.

The reflection session also helped me in making decisions about how to address the concepts that Akusi did not understanding or differences in our understandings. Then I would decide what action to take to clarify the point I was trying to make. For example, when Akusi and I differed on the meaning of student active participation, I decided to demonstrate what active participation meant as stated in the literature on integrated literacy approaches, and the

next lesson observation focused on observing what the children did in reading or writing in order to collect adequate points that illustrated active participation. Then later, during lesson reflection with examples from the lesson presentation, I attempted to illustrate what active participation was. Lastly, in the reflection session, we discussed Akusi's experiences during the three days she handled the English class alone. This helped to make connections with the subsequent lessons. Lesson reflection sessions were directly related to lesson planning, because what transpired in this session was usually a base for planning the next lesson for the following day. Since data analysis began with data collection, everything that was emerging from the lesson planning, presentation, and reflection data was recorded in the researcher's journal.

### *Researcher's Journal*

The researcher's journal was central to the study. I used it to record ideas that were related to the research study and everything that was emerging from the ongoing data analysis (Arhar et al., 2001). For example, initially, I recorded the first lesson observations notes that I took in order to get a general impression of the setting for the study. Then, I also recorded features that were noticeable from the initial and the on going data analysis. Such things like questions, memos of preliminary data analysis and anything of possible interest. For example, at the beginning of the study, during planning session, I proposed that we introduce journal writing in place of the oral drills that always introduced English lessons (after explaining why we were to introduce this type of writing). Akusi responded negatively by saying that the children could not write in journals because they did not know English and that the Primary School Advisor could not approve of changing lesson structures that were stipulated in the teacher's guide. In addition to this, Akusi quite often forgot to tell the learners to write in their journals. According to the preliminary data analysis and interpretation, I felt that it was a form of resistance on the part of Akusi. I asked questions like, "Why is Akusi demonstrating such resistance? Did I introduce the concept in the right way? What do the principles of learning say about introducing new concepts? How do we move forward?" I recorded these questions and my preliminary interpretations in the researcher's journal. As the recordings continued, I could see patterns in the learning process emerging. Finally, the journal was used to provide information for data analysis that needed to be revisited when making the final interpretation of the study.

## Data Analysis

Based on Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) "The Art and Science of Portraiture Model," the data were analyzed. In this model the researcher, the portraitist, seeks to document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place in a historical and cultural context, hoping that the audience will see themselves reflected in it, rather than giving judgment.

Data analysis began at the outset of the first data collection on 19$^{th}$ January, and continued until I stopped attending the standard six English class (two weeks before the end of the school term) and beyond. The data analyzed included the two unstructured interviews prior to and after the end of the school term, the lesson observation summary notes and audio taped lesson planning and reflection conversations. The researcher's journal was used during the ongoing data analysis procedures, so it served as both a recording place for researcher perceptions during the study and documentation of the researcher's ongoing data analysis notes. As suggested by Arhar et al., (2001), data collection and data analysis are parallel activities in qualitative research. Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious and overwhelming in terms of the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed (Merriam, 2001).

In conducting ongoing data analysis during the data collection phase of the study, I kept the purpose of the study and the research questions in the forefront of my thoughts. At the beginning of data analysis, I gave attention to anything of possible interest and importance, but as the study progressed, I started discovering things of importance because they either appeared repeatedly in data, or were connected to the study, or had some cause and effect elements (Arhar et al., 2001). At the end of each data collection day, I reread the lesson summary notes, listened to the tape recorded conversation for key words, phrases or repetitive statements that appeared to be related to the purpose of the study and research questions. I searched for emerging outstanding features. The following questions directed the analysis:

- How was the teacher demonstrating understanding of journal writing?
- How was she demonstrating understanding of reading?
- How was the teacher demonstrating understanding of student participation?

In my day-to-day ongoing analysis, I began by listening to the recording of the lesson planning session, and then I listened to our reflective session that followed the lesson. Next, I read lesson summary notes from the lesson. As I listened and reread, I looked for features of our conversation and the lessons that addressed the principles of integrated literacy approaches. As I engaged in this process, I wrote memos to myself or made comments on what I thought were outstanding features. These features were in the form of hunches, key words, repetitive statements or phrases, ideas and questions. I frequently identified ideas that I felt needed to be discussed and explored further with Akusi as we continued with our studies together.

The features of lessons, hunches or ideas that I initially selected did not characterize Akus's learning, but rather, they laid a foundation for learning about integrated approaches to literacy. For example, Akusi's determination to check and grade pupils' written work struck me in the early data. I asked myself, "What does that tell me about students' participation and metacognition?" I recorded this in the researcher journal and wrote the following questions to myself:

- Can the pupils check their own work?
- Can children write without being graded?
- What are the advantages of writing without being graded?
- Do marking their own work helps them to be active in their learning?

During the next lesson planning session, using probing questions, we discussed these questions. We agreed upon a process to experiment with the grading of student writing.

I used color-coding and my own invented symbols to mark data that related to the purpose of the study. For instance, I used "red" to mark data that were related to pupil participation, "green" for ideas that related to reading, and a "Q" for questions, "a small triangle" for hunches and a "circle" for anything of possible interest for the study. As the study progressed, the features of interest identified through the analysis of one lesson helped in deciding what the focus of the next data collection would be.

After I stopped collecting data on March 31, 2004, data analysis based upon the purpose of the study and the research questions continued. I assembled all the data, then read and reread,

listened and relistened to the data, looking for more supporting evidence for features that were tentatively identified, and worked on developing a holistic depiction of how this teacher understood and had practiced integrated literacy approaches. After organizing all the data as to how the teacher understood integrated literacy approaches, a pattern of growth and development of learning emerged.

# CHAPTER 4
# FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to report the results of analysis and interpretations of the data that I collected for a single case I studied in order to answer the question. "How does the teacher acting as a co-researcher come to understand and implement integrated literacy approaches in an English class in Malawi?" Akusi, a standard six teacher, and I worked collaboratively to integrate concepts of reading and writing in the context of English instruction in Malawi. In addition, we implemented strategies for increasing student levels of engagement in instructional experiences.

Data were collected for thirteen weeks and were based upon pre and post-interviews, class observation summary notes and tape-recorded lesson planning and reflection conversations. The results from the case study suggested that Akusi's understanding and implementation of integrated literacy approaches was a gradual process of growth that was influenced by a variety of interrelated factors related to the context of the teaching. This chapter begins with a description of the context of the case, followed by an explanation of the circumstances of the growth process that led to Akusi's development of understandings and implementation of the integrated reading and writing concepts. Finally, I provide a description of my growth in understanding integrated literacy approaches.

## Description of the Research Context

Here, the context of the case will be provided, including the location, a physical description of the two classrooms, the students and the teachers in the class, events that led to a change in classrooms, and what a typical English language arts lesson looked like in Akusi's standard six class.

### *Location*

The class was in one of the Malawi primary schools called Kapeni Demonstration School. Kapeni was a demonstration school for Blantyre Teacher Training College. A demonstration school is a complete primary school comprising standards one to eight. By design,

demonstration schools are attached to a teacher training college to serve as a site for student teachers. Kapeni was not originally designed to be a demonstration school, but because Blantyre Teacher Training College had a pressing need for a demonstration school, it adopted Kapeni. Probably, the proximity of this local primary school to the college was a deciding factor in the selection of this particular site as the demonstration school for this teacher training college.

The adoption of Kapeni primary school as a demonstration school is grounded in the historical background of the college's establishment. Previously, Blantyre Teacher Training College campus belonged to one of the three constituents of the University of Malawi that were located in Blantyre but in separate sites. At this time, it was established to train secondary school teachers and it was called Soche Hill College of Education. The demonstration school for this college was Soche Hill Secondary School, situated next to the college. Kapeni Primary School was also located on the other side of the college to serve primary school children from the local community around the Soche Hill College of Education. When the university of Malawi constituencies were moved from Blantyre to converge at one place at the new premises in Zomba, the site for Soche Hill College of Education was converted into Blantyre Teacher Training College for training primary school teachers, but there was no demonstration school. For that reason, Blantyre Teacher Training College adopted Kapeni primary school to be used as its demonstration school for the student teachers connected to their pre-service teacher education courses. In most cases, demonstration schools are controlled by the teacher training colleges. However, because Kapeni was not originally designed to be a demonstration school, the College did not gain full control of the school. Nonetheless, it is publicly known as Kapeni Demonstration School.

There are seven buildings that contain two classes each at Kapeni. These buildings lie parallel to one another. A small building lying adjacent to the classroom blocks comprises the head teacher's office, staff room and storeroom for the whole school. The school has a large bare, dusty terrain with little landscaping around it. There are a few trees and sporadic flowers. A semi-urban community with a mostly Chichewa speaking population surrounds the school and makes up the school's catchment area.

### Description of the First Classroom

The first classroom was in Kapeni, the classroom in which Akusi taught her lessons. The classroom was rectangular and of a standard size for a Malawi primary school. The walls were painted with dark gray paint and were bare. The floor was concrete and swept, but was dusty probably because of inadequate cleaning. The children themselves were responsible for cleaning the classroom. There were no desks for the children, so they sat on the floor. The only available furniture was a bench placed at the middle-back of the class for the teachers.

The roof was made of iron sheeting and there was no ceiling. Lack of a ceiling meant that the classroom was susceptible to high temperatures especially around midday, as Malawi is geographically in a sub-tropical region; hence, the area experiences hot seasons for most of the year. The high temperatures probably caused discomfort for the children who were already overcrowded in the classroom. The lack of a ceiling also meant that there was a lot of noise when it rained, consequently interfering with verbal communication, the major means of communication in the classroom. There was no display of teaching and learning aids. Lack of security was claimed to be the main reason for the lack of teaching and learning aids in the room; the door was not lockable and vandalism was prevalent. Teachers brought teaching and learning aids when they were needed for a lesson and took them away after lessons.

The classroom had permanently opened windows made from fixed white painted wooden louvers. These windows were on one side of the four walls. Although the louvers allowed fresh air in the room, they inhibited full daylight; for that reason the room was in semi-darkness, which was also exacerbated by the gray painted walls. The room had a spacious chalkboard that stretched from one side of the wall to the other in front of the room. The chalkboard was made of concrete and painted black, but it did not have very smooth surface. An improvised chalkboard duster that looked like a small dirty ragged pillow was used to clean the board. However, it was easy to use this duster to clean off after writing with white chalk. Only white chalk was available; for that reason teachers could not be very creative as regards the use of different colors on the chalkboard in teaching and learning. In the absence of teaching and learning aids in Malawi schools, the chalkboard and chalk are the most readily available teaching and learning aids that are provided for in many schools, and this was the case at Kapeni.

*Students and Teachers*

There were 167 students in this class, 90 girls and 77 boys. Their ages ranged between nine and thirteen years and all of them wore school uniforms. Girls wore blue dresses with white collars, and boys wore gray shorts and blue short-sleeved shirts. Some uniforms were faded and torn. Some students wore shoes and some did not. The students of both gender had short hair; some combed it, and some did not. Primary school children in Malawi are by policy not allowed to grow long hair. They are required to keep it short for, by its nature, it is easier to comb and keep clean if it is short. The room was packed to the brim because it was meant to accommodate 50 students only, and not 167. For that reason, the students were sitting close to each other on the floor in sideways lines with shoulders almost touching and facing the chalkboard.

The girls chose to sit in front lines with their legs straight on the floor. Some sat on little pieces of cloth that they spread on the floor to prevent their dresses from getting dirty from the dusty floor; many of these girls shared their cloth with their friends. The boys sat at the back of the room with their legs bent, most likely because of lack of space. Some boys sat on the sides of the class with their backs against the walls. They were clustered according to their peer groups. Some were sitting on their book bags, perhaps to protect themselves from the dusty hard floor. The teacher did not have any control over the seating plan because there were so many students.

The teacher's movement when teaching was confined to a small space in front of the class. She had to be careful not to step on the children's feet. There was no opportunity to move amongst the students because there was literally no space for movement. The students themselves could only move if they stood up. I, as a researcher, was given a chair close to the door to sit in. This chair was at the left hand corner of the classroom, facing the students. There was no alternative space for me to sit. My position in the front of the room, where I was writing lesson observation summary notes, was not ideal because I was often aware that I distracted students.

Learning materials that were owned by the students were writing pens and a few notebooks. Learners had access to a few English Curriculum books that the teacher brought to the class during English lessons. Three or more students shared one book when asked to read. These books were retrieved for storage at the end of each lesson.

During lessons, the students sat quietly listening to the teacher. Some students had been elected as leaders, and they reprimanded any talking. These students had small sticks, which they used to hit their friends who were found talking to each other. Talking was only allowed when students were responding to a teacher's question or engaged in a class activity. Every now and again, students came to the front of the room to ask for permission from the teacher to go out. They knelt down and said "please teacher may I go out." The teacher always gave permission because it was believed that the children were going to answer to nature's call.

Three women teachers were assigned to teach in this class. They split up the subjects so that each teacher was only responsible for a few content subjects, and they were teaching in turns. When one was teaching, the other two either sat on the bench that was placed at the back of the classroom doing other things, or sometimes they left the classroom and came back when it was time for their turn to teach. There was no indication that the teachers ever participated in each other's lessons. Akusi, the co-researcher, was one of the teachers and she taught English, Social Studies, Agriculture and Science.

### *Description of the Second Classroom*

The conditions of the first class posed an obvious challenge in implementing the integrated literacy activities successfully. The high enrollment was going to make it extremely difficult to actively engage children in cooperative, integrated, reading and writing tasks.

Without going into all of the details of why so many children were heaped in one class, actually I think that some readers might want to read a bit of an explanation of this. High enrollment in primary classrooms is a very common condition in Malawi schools. In 1994, Free Primary Education was established in Malawi for the first time. Because students could now attend school without paying fees, suddenly, almost every primary classroom in the country was brimming with students. Due to the poverty of the country as a whole, it has not been possible for the number of new schools and classrooms to be built that would allow for small class sizes. The average Malawi primary classroom now has between 85 and 180 pupils (Kishindo et al., 2005). In most primary schools especially in the urban areas, three teachers are assigned to groups of approximately 180 students. There are two basic choices. In one case scenario, each of the teachers can take a group of about 60 students and teach all content area subject to the group, with two teachers working with student groups in the schoolyard and one teacher working with

students in the classroom. In the other case scenario, the teachers can split up the teaching of the content area subjects, and each teacher can teach their assigned content to the whole group of students. In most Malawian Primary schools, the later is the choice. Teachers do not want to teach all subject areas to students in the schoolyard under the sun with no chalkboard.

I negotiated with Akusi and the Kapeni Head Teacher to create the possibility of splitting the class into three streams for the sake of the study. Splitting the class also meant that each teacher would have to handle a class individually and teach all subjects. This suggestion was in accordance with the Malawi primary education policy that states that a primary school teacher should be able to teach all subjects in a particular class. In addition, one of the current goals of Ministry of Education was to reduce the ratio of teacher pupil to 1:60 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2000).

Akusi and the head teacher were happy with the plan for splitting the class into three streams; however, Akusi's colleagues only reluctantly accepted the proposal. Nevertheless, Standards 6A, 6B, and 6C were formed in the second week of the study. Akusi was allocated standard 6C, and because of the study, the head teacher recommended that she remain with her group in the classroom. The other two classes were to be learning under the trees because there were no extra classrooms to accommodate these students. During the third week of the study, it rained heavily; hence, the other two classes naturally came back into the classroom seeking shelter. For that reason, the solution to the problem of high enrollment had failed. Since it was the rainy season in Malawi, it was now apparent that this problem was going to be long term. Fortunately, there was an alternative for resolving the problem.

With permission and support from the Head Teacher of Kapeni primary school, I consulted with the principal of Blantyre Teachers Training College about the possibility of using a college classroom for the research project. The principal's response was positive; she released a building containing three classes and an office that were not in use by the college at the time. Asking for room at the college was not unusual. I had formerly worked at the Blantyre Teacher Training College, and was aware that there was a mutual working relationship that existed between these two institutions. Further, it was not the first time the college had released rooms to be used by the primary school children.

Hence, the three groups of standard 6A, 6B, and 6C moved and occupied classrooms in the Teacher Training College for the entire first school term. The research project group initially

had 60 students enrolled, but as the weeks went by, the number increased to 78. There were 42 girls and 36 boys. Akusi's explanation for the increase was that some students from the other classes wanted to join the research project section because they heard that they would be writing journals, a concept that was new to the children. She allowed the extra students to stay. For that reason, the new class was very full.

The college classroom had minor physical differences from the previous Kapeni classroom. For example, it had white painted walls and on one side of the rectangular room there were windows that allowed enough light into the classroom (however, most of the windowpanes were broken). There was a chalkboard made of a canvas-like material and designed so that it could be rolled up and down. In addition, there was a small desk placed at the right hand side corner in front of the classroom for the teacher. Akusi and I used this small desk during lesson presentations. There were no desks and the children still sat on the floor. If there had been student teachers in this classroom, they would not have been required to sit on the floor. I did not inquire about the desks because it was normal for average Malawi school children to learn while sitting on the floor.

The move to Blantyre Teacher Training College campus provided advantages that went beyond the lowered enrollment. This location allowed access to more English curriculum books and supplementary readers that were stocked in the college library. The children were for the first time allowed to carry the textbooks home through Akusi's own initiative and organization. The following was a depiction of Akusi's typical language arts lesson.

### *Akusi's Typical Language Arts Lessons*

According to the Malawi government, English is the official language of the country, and Chichewa is the national language. As already mentioned in the literature review, Malawi is a multilingual country with approximately thirteen languages (Kayambazinthu, 1998). English is a foreign language; hence, it becomes a second language to those children whose mother tongue is Chichewa. Nevertheless, to the children whose first language is not Chichewa, English is the third language because these children learn their mother tongue in the home and community, then are expected to learn Chichewa and English in school. In their day-to-day life, Malawian Children speak their native languages, which include Chichewa, Tumbuka, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Lambya and Nkhonde, just to cite a few examples. In the context of this study, the

majority of children had Chichewa as their first language. English language arts lessons were covered in eight periods of thirty minutes each week. The following teaching vignette represents characteristics of language arts lessons.

"Its time for English. Put away everything and look in front," Akusi announced. Children knew that the announcement meant changing subjects and making some noise. They packed their notebooks while Akusi wrote "English" on the top middle of the chalkboard. Then Akusi called for pupils' attention to listen to what she was going to say. Akusi articulated the English short conversation three times while the pupils listened quietly "Would you come for dinner, Sir/Madam?" "Certainly, yes." Afterward the children repeated the conversation in chorus three times:

Akusi:  "Would you come for dinner, Sir/Madam?"

Whole Class: "Would you come for dinner, Sir/Madam?

Akusi:  "Certainly, yes."

Whole class: "Certainly, yes."

After that, Akusi called a child to the front and instructed the whole class to watch what they would do. She further instructed the children to observe and listen carefully because they were expected to do the same in pairs afterwards as illustrated below:

Akusi:  "Would you come home for dinner Mphatso?"

    (Akusi helped the child to say "Certainly yes.")

Student:  "Certainly yes".

Akusi:  "It is your turn. Ask me, would you come home for dinner madam?"

Student:  "Would you come for dinner madam?"

Akusi:  "Certainly, yes."

After this demonstration, the Akusi asked another pair of children to demonstrate the same conversation in front of the class for their friends to see. Then she asked the class to group themselves in pairs and practice what had been demonstrated. Three minutes was allotted this practice. The pair work was done while standing, allowing a little space for the teacher to go around supervising the children's conversation. The pair activity was characterized by a lot of noise. Some were unable to say the words; others just stood and looked at each other, others were beginning to play. Since the class was too large, the teacher managed to meet with four or five pairs only, and then she stopped the activity and asked students to sit down.

After that, Akusi quickly distributed English curriculum textbooks and children read aloud in chorus, a paragraph or two. There were not enough books for the large class, so the students had to share one book between two or three people. While the children were reading, Akusi wrote some questions on the chalkboard. When the children had finished reading, they answered the questions orally on some days and in writing on other days. Sometimes she introduced a grammar point, which the children then practiced. If it was a written exercise, Akusi went around marking and giving individual help. When the children wrote their responses, because of the size of the class and the limited time, the teacher could not look at everybody's work. To end the lesson, Akusi discussed the answers to the questions with the students and individuals provided oral responses. Then she collected the curriculum books they were reading for safekeeping.

### *Reflection on the Teaching Vignette*

After observing four lessons, I noted that the lessons had some common characteristics and they followed a particular pattern. The characteristics were oral drills, demonstration pair and pair activity, reading aloud and responding to comprehension questions, orally or in writing. Sometimes, they practiced a grammar point.  The pattern was that in all the four lessons, Akusi introduced the lessons with an oral drill of a short English conversation. Then she helped the children to practice speaking the statements that made up the conversation. After that, she gave two demonstrations of how two people may carry out the conversation in front of the class. The first demonstration involved a speaking practice between Akusi and one learner she selected from the class while the remainder of the class watched. Next, she asked two volunteers to come to the front of the class to do the same dialogue with the help of the teacher. According to Akusi, the children who volunteered to participate in the demonstration pair were better performers in the class. Then she directed the students to group themselves in pairs and practice the dialogue while standing. The practice was for three minutes. As the children practiced the conversation, the teacher went around supervising; she managed to meet with four or five pairs only since the class was too large. The activity was characterized by a lot of noise. Some were unable to say the words; others just stood and looked at each other; others were beginning to play.

After the pair conversation activity, Akusi read aloud a paragraph from the English curriculum textbook while the children listened and later asked the children to read aloud or

silently the same paragraph from the same textbooks. Then they answered oral or written questions based on what they had read, or alternatively, they practiced a grammar point. Finally, to conclude the lesson, it was either repeating to speak the conversation statements chorally, or doing corrections to the written comprehension questions.

After consulting Akusi, I discovered that the Teacher's Guide textbook prescribed the lesson's pattern and characteristics, as well as the content. The teacher's guide was a product of the national syllabus. Akusi was following what she had been trained to do. This was consistent with the findings of Stuart and Kunje (2000) who demonstrated in their teacher education studies that teachers in Malawi were trained as technicians with restricted roles of delivering the curriculum. The curriculum focused on fragmenting curricular essentials, so that isolated skills and concepts could be mastered along a linear paradigm.

## The Plan for Integrated Literacy Instruction in Akusi's Classroom

The plan for integrated literacy instruction in this Malawi classroom was designed to be consistent with overall Malawi goals for English instruction. Akusi appeared to be utilizing a very narrow range of instructional practices in this endeavor. This finding was in agreement with Williams (1993) research, which indicated that Malawi teachers have a tendency to rely heavily upon traditional approaches to English instruction.

Further, I recognized that Akusi was using the traditional bottom-up approach. In bottom-up approaches to instruction, language learning is presented in fragments of memorized aural drills, grammar points, and paragraph reading with anticipation that the learners will be able to transfer the memorized material into spontaneous communication (Vacca et al., 2000). The learner is usually passive. The teacher decides when and what children should say, read, or write about. They read from a curriculum textbook only, and the purpose of reading and writing is limited to answering aural or written comprehension questions. Students' written work was always checked and graded. Question and answer is the dominant teaching method. This method, coupled with brief amounts of time for practicing English in class, restricts pupil participation because it requires a one-to-one interaction and only a few students have the opportunity to answer the questions. Traditional approaches to language learning are based on the behavioral psychology, which influenced hypotheses about language learning prior to the 1970's. These

psychologists described language learning as a set of learned habits learned through stimulus, response and reward conditions.

This study required that Akusi and I examine integrated literacy approaches that are based on the constructivist paradigm, which holds that learning is an active process in which second language learning is more effective from a top-down perspective (Shrum & Glisan, 2000; Vacca et al., 2000). Similarly, integrated approaches to literacy learning are based on the assumption that authentic learning utilizing real world literacy tasks are more powerful in influencing literacy learning because it is more meaningful to the learner. Integrated literacy instruction is made meaningful in sense that information or knowledge construction is primarily an integrative process and is not used to answer isolated problems (Gavelek et al., 1999).

In order to create integrated literacy instruction, it was important that the English language be presented as naturally as possible; that is, an important goal was to assure that English was acquired within the context of common practical everyday activities. McGee and Richgels (2000) maintain that children can effectively learn another language if the new language is presented in a holistic manner, as opposed to presenting isolated skills, grammar rules, vocabulary, or any out of context language instruction. The use of natural language is an active communication process, whether the participants are listening, speaking, reading or writing (Bransford et al., 2000). Thus, it was important that the children would be active and not passive, and that they would read and write extensively with the curriculum textbook as the only one of the available tools. Another goal was that the students would read and write what they wanted in order to construct and increase their knowledge and not to solely answer questions and be graded.

Finally, the plan for integrated literacy instruction required that the teacher be a facilitator. A facilitator guides and design opportunities for cooperative learning amongst peers and the community (Pollard, 2001). Implementing integrated literacy approaches meant that Akusi and I should rethink our traditional conceptualization of teaching and learning and collaborate to put into practice a constructivist-based approach to English language learning, utilizing integration of language arts. Integration in language has several connotations, but for the sake of this study, it was limited to the integration of reading and writing with high levels of student participation as a constant strand in all classroom activities. We collaboratively engaged in reflective teaching as we implemented the integrated literacy approaches.

# Collaborative Teaching and Learning Process

As mentioned in the methodology, collaboration was a goal of the teaching and learning process, and the research design also included a study of how Akusi understood and implemented integrated literacy approaches. The reflective teaching was a cyclical process that involved Akusi and I in lesson planning, presentations and lesson reflections (Pollard, 2001). As we jointly became involved in trying to understand and make sense of integrated literacy approaches through reflective teaching and learning, several interesting things were revealed from data. First, the initial data from this cyclic process revealed that the hierarchical relationship between Akusi and me, coupled with our teaching and learning beliefs, hindered and contradicted with the constructivists theories of learning upon which the integrated literacy approaches are built. Secondly, there was evidence of resistance to ideas about integrated literacy instruction on the part of Akusi at the initial stage of the study. Thirdly, the data provided insight into how Akusi was learning and implementing integrated literacy approaches. Lastly, data showed that I interacted with Akusi in trying to make sense of and understand the integrated literacy approaches through reflection; likewise, there was an impact on me to reflect upon my practices as a teacher educator.

To begin the study, I had to get the ball rolling by relaying again to Akusi the integrated components of English literacy that would be present in every lesson, thus reading and writing and high level learner participation as a constant strand in all reading and writing activities. I planned for unstructured journal writing to be the focus of writing in every lesson for several reasons. First, unstructured journal writing was interesting because children wrote what they wanted. It was non-threatening because it was not graded. A low-stakes writing task that helped students to start learning from simple writing before getting involved with high-stakes writing. In addition, it provided a continuous writing activity in every lesson.

Data indicated that at the onset, Akusi still held the belief that I was the authority in the study and, therefore, more knowledgeable despite our agreement to be colleagues in this endeavor. This was to be expected given that I had made initial plans such as the unstructured journal writing. She would ask, "Am I doing it right?" This element was also evident in the early

lesson reflections. Akusi insisted that I tell her where she did wrongly in her lesson presentation. I had to continually assure her that I was a colleague in this study and not an evaluator, that I only had the theoretical knowledge of integration concepts, and that the practicality of these concepts depended on what she and I decided to do. In addition, I respected Akusi's views and judgments she held about the phenomenon of teaching English as a second language. If I wanted her to change her beliefs about something, I made a suggestion for us to try out a concept, and together we would see what happened. For example, one time we had different conceptions about "pupil active engagement in the classroom." The theory indicated that learning required active participation on the part of the pupils. According to Akusi, pupil active engagement meant pupils ability to answer oral or written questions when the teacher called upon her/him to do so. However, from a theoretical perspective, an integrated literacy approach suggested that pupil engagement meant every pupil would be actively involved in the task. Without judging or correcting Akusi, I gave a demonstration lesson to illustrate student engagement in class. After reflecting on the demonstration lesson, we both developed a shared understanding of pupil active engagement in a learning situation.

After every lesson, we discussed the aspects of the lesson that worked and those that we could improve upon. I refused to make any judgments, but rather insisted that we discuss issues and come up with solutions together. Akusi's position of wanting to assume the passive role was probably due to her history of the teacher-centered types of educational experiences in Malawi in which the learner is passive because the teacher is believed to be the master of knowledge with the learner as the receiver (Stuart & Kunje, 2000).

However, as we continued with planning together, sometimes co-teaching and reflecting on lessons together, Akusi started to become more open and involved, causing our relationship to begin shifting towards an equal relationship. The establishment of equal relationships among participants is a principle that undergirds action research. It ensures cooperation, as well as open and sincere communication amongst the participants (Arhar et al., 2001). One of the indications that a cooperative relationship was being established came when Akusi started expressing criticism of the sample lessons in the teacher's guide. She began to make suggestions about altering some components of these sample lessons as to include the integrated literacy approaches of reading and writing. Previously, Akusi depended solely on the teacher's guide; she picked the lessons from the guide without questioning and presented them to the class, and this is

what Akusi was trained to do. As already mentioned, this is consistent with the findings of Stuart and Kunje (2000) who demonstrated in their teacher education studies that teachers in Malawi were trained as technicians with restricted roles of delivering the curriculum. Moreover, the English teacher's guide contained lessons that were very much oriented to the behaviorist approach. They reflected almost the same pattern of presenting every lesson: oral practice of language segments, followed by pair work, discussing new vocabulary, and reading followed by answering comprehension questions either orally or written. In these lessons, the purpose of reading and writing was limited to answering questions.

In addition to journal writing, I proposed that journal writing should be incorporated in the lessons to replace the introductory part of the English lesson that began lessons with aural drills of language segments. This meant changing what Akusi was accustomed to do as regards introducing English lessons. I asked Akusi what she felt about the suggestion. Akusi responded that it could not work, that the children could not write in journals because they did not know English, and that the Primary school Advisor could not approve of us modifying what the teachers' guide suggested. Further, I proposed that children should be allowed to mark their own work with the help of the teacher. Akusi also rejected the idea by saying that pupils could not be trusted to mark their own work because they might cheat. For that reason she needed to see what the pupils were doing.

Akusi's responses to these proposals raised concern in me. Based on her interest in participating in the study, I thought she would automatically jump at the new ideas and learn them straight away. I was depending on her for the implementation of these integrated literacy approaches. Although I understood the concept of journal writing, I could not demonstrate how it could be done in such a large class, which Akusi handled with ease. I interpreted Akusi's responses, as resistance to the new ideas. "Resistance means to block progress" (Oxford, 1996). This resistance seemed to be contradictory to Akusi's overall positive attitude towards the study. It is possible that this resistance was unconsciously displayed because her disposition was still that of interest in and willingness to participate in the study. I raised a number of questions to myself. "Was she defending her knowledge and beliefs or confirming what Ball and Cohen (1999) stated about teacher learning?" (That teacher beliefs, knowledge, images and dispositions about teaching which accumulate over time as they themselves experience learning as students and teachers, are fixed, powerful and cannot be easily changed by teacher education programs).

Borko and Putman (1986) also suggest that pre-requisite knowledge teachers' embrace is a challenge to teacher education and professional development. Secondly, "Could it be that I did not make the intent of the study clear?" Fullan (1982) suggested that when teachers do not get a clear understanding of the need for change, clear goals, a means of achieving the change, and involvement in the planning process, they tend to resist new ideas. "Was Akusi's reaction a consequence of not being involved when I was initiating, planning and determining the focus and content of the study;" hence, she did not feel part of the study (Fullan, 1982)? In addition, I wondered, "Was there a problem with my approach to introducing journal writing and the new strategy of marking students' exercises?"

I decided to change my approach to make things start moving again. First, I had to state the purpose and goals of the study to Akusi again. I emphasized that what we were doing was on a trial basis and that the whole purpose of the study was to see if integrated literacy approaches were workable in a Malawi classroom and that I needed her assistance. For the PEA, I showed her the letter from the District Education Manager (DEM) that granted permission to conduct the study.

Akusi's reaction reminded me that I had skipped a stage in how learning happens. I went straight to telling her what to do instead of learning about her knowledge of integration and pupil participation and connecting with what we wanted to learn. Hence, I asked Akusi what integration and student participation meant to her. This is the way she defined the two terms:

Akusi: Integration is when ideas and knowledge in one subject are used in another subject. Do you remember, one time we were looking at Nouns? We were saying, mention the body parts of a person…that was Science in an English lesson. Pupil active engagement is when pupils are able to answer questions correctly.

Edith: That is true. However, we can extend the definition of integration in language to also mean when the language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening are included in a single lesson. Integration means so many things but in our study, we will focus much on reading and writing.

After I changed my approach, Akusi gradually started contributing positively to the study. I found that using probing questions and asking for her opinion worked much better than just telling her what to do. For example, I asked her to suggest how we could carry on with the journal writing considering that the children (by her analysis of their performance) did not know English very well. She suggested that we should first guide the children with what they should write, before asking them to write on their own what they wanted. For instance, she suggested: "I will first tell them a story and the pupils should listen. At the end, I will ask them to pick out one sentence or anything, they have heard from the story to write in their journals".

Akusi's idea that we first give the children some language input through telling them a story in order to initiate journal writing was impressive and in keeping with the input hypothesis of learning a second language. Language learners need large amounts of contextualized, meaningful input that is interesting and a little beyond their current level of competence in order to acquire language (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Children started writing in their journals after being given the input in the form of stories, discussions, or what they heard from the radio. At first, their writing was mostly in form of single words. As the study went on, Akusi and I shared many more good ideas that guided the students to improve writing in their journals. For example, when I noted that children had only been making a list of words in their journals for some days, I suggested to Akusi that she encourage them to start writing short sentences. Many pupils were able to do it, and Akusi learned that journal writing was much more than just listing words.

Akusi's understanding of integration concepts was very much reflected in the lesson implementations and reflections. For example, in one of the lessons, she instructed the children to write whatever they wanted in their journal notebooks, soon, some children were beckoning to her that they had finished writing. Akusi responded, "Don't say I have finished.  Keep on writing until I tell you to stop."

She showed that she had learned one of the concepts of journal writing whereby children are encouraged to keep on writing without interruptions just for the sake of writing. In addition, she had stopped marking the children's journals. Earlier on, she found herself marking the journals when the students beckoned to her that they had finished. Akusi's change towards understanding the concepts of journal writing was gradual through continued practice of writing in her own journal and helping the students to do the same.

At first, Akusi's own journal writing was characterized by sporadic entries, and she gave excuses that she forgot to write in her journal. This was also reflected in the lessons she conducted single handedly in the other English lessons; she, during reflection, claimed that she forgot to ask the children to write in their journals. Akusi could not give to the students what she herself did not like or understand. As already stated, whatever she did not understand during planning was also reflected in lesson implementation and reflections. However, with repeated practice and coaching, journal writing with the students became an effortless endeavor within every lesson. I assumed that Akusi had learned the idea of journal writing, and it had become an automatic action in every English lesson.

Tape-recorded data from lesson reflection provided insight into how Akusi was learning and implementing the integrated literacy approaches. It was in lesson reflection that Akusi and I questioned, examined, evaluated and criticized the lesson plan and lesson presentation, and then made decisions about the next action in learning the integrated literacy approaches. In reflection sessions, as usual sitting opposite each other on an office desk, we critically examined the outcomes of the lesson plans and lesson presentations of that particular day. The following questions guided our discussion:

- What was our general impression of the lesson today?
- What were we trying to achieve and if we achieved our objectives?
- Were there reading and writing activities? How were they conducted?
- How did we make the students active as they read or write?
- What teaching and learning materials did we use to facilitate reading and writing?

We discussed the reasons why we rated lessons in positive and negative ways and how we intended to improve. For example, in one of the reading lessons in which I was a complete observer, I wrote the following lesson summary for examination in our reflection:

Akusi started the lesson by asking students to write in their journals for five minutes. Next, she put them in groups of six, with three books per group to read aloud to each other, in turns. After they had read for some time, Akusi guided them to the next activity, answering comprehension questions. She posed a question to the whole class, paused, then many students raised up their hands beckoning "teacher…teacher…teacher," hoping to be selected by the teacher to answer the question. Then the teacher in her authority selected the one to give an answer orally as well. Since there were only five questions, I

observed that only seven children had the opportunity to answer questions. The remaining though they raised hands showing eagerness to participate did not have the chance to answer. Then the lesson ended with no reference to the groups again.

In the reflection, we first identified the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. The lesson's strengths were that it included reading and writing and the students were active. They were active when they wrote in their journals and they read to each other in pairs. The weak point of the lesson was that students were answering comprehension questions one to one with the teacher. Thus, the teacher posed a question orally; then children raised their hands beckoning "teacher… teacher… teacher"; then the teacher in her authority chose pupils, one by one at random. Since the questions were only five and it was not possible to allow each child out of the 78 to give an answer, only seven children had the opportunity of answering the questions. The remaining though they raised hands showing eagerness to participate, they did not have a chance to answer; thus there was low level of student engagement in the activity. Through questioning, I helped Akusi to explore student participation in the lesson as illustrated in one of the conversations as shown below.

> Edith: Did you notice that when you posed a question, almost all the students
> Raised their hands, calling 'teacher… teacher…teacher?' A sign that they
> had something to contribute, but the opportunity was not there. You
> selected one and the rest put down their hands, probably with
> disappointment.
>
> Akusi: Yes…I think everybody wanted to answer.
>
> Edith: Could we have provided an opportunity so that all the 78 pupils were
> involved in answering the questions?
>
> Akusi: I think they could have written the answers in their pairs or groups, in such
> a way everybody would have participated.

Our discussion helped Akusi to recognize that the oral question and answer method dominated the lesson and limited participation to only a few students. In addition, the discussion helped to clarify that learning needs to be an active process. The children who were answering questions were most likely the ones learning because they were active. The rest were passive and may not have been learning. We concluded that individual; pair or group written work would have maximized student participation. We also recognized that one weakness of the lesson was

that, during planning, we did not make any provision as to how students were going to work in their groups with regard to answering comprehension questions. That is why Akusi resorted to total reliance on the traditional method of using question and answer. We learned that the group method maximized pupil participation in a large class, but it also required thorough planning on how to work with the groups effectively throughout the whole lesson. The lessons Akusi and I learned through the reflection helped to improve planning and practice of the next lesson.

Although the focus of the study was on reading and writing and how pupils were engaged in these processes, we also discussed other factors that were emerging and seemed unique and relevant during lesson planning and presentation. For example, in the early days of our work together, Akusi tended to revert to her traditional ways of teaching. This was happening on the days when she was planning and teaching English single handedly, because we only worked together for two days in a week. On the remaining three days, she worked alone, but she still shared her experiences she had had in those three days when we met. Such comments like these were common. "I forgot to write in my journal." "I forgot to tell the students to write in their journals", or "I only used question and answer method in my lessons." she later acknowledged that she found it easier to work with the integrated literacy approaches when we planned and worked together. "I enjoy it when we plan together, I wish this could be an ongoing thing in our day to day teaching."

I agreed with her that the collaboration we were having was making it easier for us to learn these new concepts easily, because I had a similar experience one time when she had to go away. Akusi proposed that I handle the class alone, but I refused because I did not feel confident enough to plan and present a lesson alone in her absence in such a big class. I proposed that when the study was over, she could be collaborating with her colleagues; however, but she did not feel confident that she could convince her friends to use the integration approaches. Pollard (2001) supports the idea that collaboration makes teacher learning easier in reflective teaching because it reduces personal insecurities of trying out innovative ideas. As the collaboration in the study continued, our relationship and interdependence developed further. We became more relaxed and open to each other. We learned to laugh at the blunders we made and mutually discussed how to improve on the integrated literacy we were engaged in with ease.

In these reflection sessions, there were also manifestations of elements of growth in learning for both Akusi and me. At first, Akusi perceived lesson reflections as evaluations of her

teaching by me as an expert. She made comments and asked questions like, "Am I doing it right?" "The lesson was good but I did not do well on writing." "May be I should have given the children more time to write in their journals." Often, she would list the things she thought she had failed to do without recognizing and acknowledging the things she had done right. I observed this pattern of focusing on weaker lesson components in several lesson reflection sessions. Akusi's perception of looking at self-evaluation from the negative side may have been developed from the banking type of education experiences in the teaching profession in Malawi. On the other hand, early data analysis showed that I had assumed that position of an evaluator because I dominated the reflection rather than supporting Akusi in taking control of her learning, as the following conversation shows:

> Edith: Although the class was disturbed, there were some attributes of participation. Especially I saw a lot of participation when you asked them to read to each other in pairs, then pick out and write in their notebooks sentences that contained Nouns.

> Akusi: Most pupils took part in trying to find sentences….I saw that everybody was busy.

> Edith: Do you think there were any integrated aspects in the lesson?

> Akusi: Yes, because they did reading from the supplementary books and they identified and wrote sentences that contained Nouns. They also wrote in their journals.

> Edith: I thought our main problem was that we could not go around to check what the students were doing because the class today was too packed. I tried to count them, they were 105 students. I thought that was an impossible situation, but we did it.

As the study and the collaborative teaching process continued, data indicated that Akusi was shifting from negative self-evaluations towards more constructive ways of looking at lessons. The following example in our conversation indicated that Akusi had started to make much progress in teaching journal writing.

> Edith: Another thing I liked… you told them to write in their journals as much as they could. They took the challenge. When some raised up their hands

to announce that they had finished, you encouraged them to keep on

writing until you told them to stop. That was good.

Akusi: Some wrote almost the whole page. Yeah, you see. Everybody was

willing to write as much as they could.

Edith: That is what we want, just to make them write. We are not going to judge

whether they have written good work or not, but that idea of wanting to …

(together we said) "write", because they improve as the go along, as they

read books, they start relating on their own what they are learning.

From that point onwards, Akusi conducted journal-writing activities with trust and ease. She appreciated that children needed to be challenged with tasks that were a little bit beyond their ability. Giving children challenging tasks that are a little bit beyond their ability is a concept that matches theories of the zone of proximal development (Shrum & Glisan, 2000).

However, there were certain concepts that, even after I explained them with illustration, were not acted upon by Akusi. Hence, in such circumstances I conducted a demonstration lesson. For example, I conducted a lesson to demonstrate that children could actually check their work without the teacher putting a red pen on their notebooks in order to grade them. The focus of the demonstration was also to emphasize student active engagement. When I decided to give a demonstration, I did not state that it was a "demonstration lesson." Rather, these lessons were treated as aspects of the collaborative learning process. For instance, after I taught a lesson, our reflective conversation included:

Edith:  How did you see children marking their own work?

Akusi: I saw that they were very happy. We laughed… and further joked that

there was no police today to check what they were doing…(we laughed

together).

Edith: Its up to the teacher to make a balance between children's part in checking

their work and that of the teacher.

As the study was approaching the end, Akusi demonstrated that she had grasped most of the integrated literacy approach concepts. She was able to plan and implement reading and writing with high student involvement with ease. The English teacher's guide and the curriculum book did not control her actions, but rather, she controlled them. She demonstrated that she enjoyed using the supplementary readers and other texts in addition to the curriculum book

because she kept the children busy with the supplementary books through out the semester. The children borrowed the books at their own pace. She even trusted the children to take the books home, something that never happened previously.

## Analysis of Akusi's Change

Akusi demonstrated a gradual pattern of growth and change in learning to use integrated approaches to learning English as a second language. Data reflected distinctive events and features of the learning process. The data included evidence of how Akusi actually came to understand and implement literacy approaches in an English class. As Borko & Putman (1986) state, learning processes are the same, no matter who the learners are. Learning can be defined as negotiating what learners already know with what they do not know (Bransford et al., 2000). Akusi did not learn the concepts automatically when they were presented to her in conversation; preliminary data interpretation indicated some forms of resistance and feelings of insecurity towards learning the integrated literacy approaches. This interpretation was also a feedback to me to reflect on my actions towards Akusi. For example, data from lesson planning, implementation and self-reflection indicated that in the initial presentation of the integrated literacy approach ideas, I had ignored Akusi's existing knowledge and beliefs. I believe that my own background in behavioral teacher-centered approaches must have influenced me to think that Akusi was there to be filled with the integrated literacy approaches knowledge, hence the resistance. After making use of Akusi's pre-requisite knowledge about integration and providing more support so that she could feel secure, the next stage was to negotiate Akusi's traditional teacher-centered practices of teaching to read and write with the integrated literacy approaches founded in constructivism.

Akusi had traditional ideas about all the concepts of integrated literacy approaches, including reading, writing, and pupil participation. The traditional way of teaching English in Malawi is based on structural and behavioral psychology (Menyuk, 2003) and utilizes a transmission style of low level question and answer sessions, grammatical analysis and pattern drills (Crawford, 2003; Stuart & Kunje, 2000). In the past, most children failed to acquire the target language, English, and as a result, they failed examinations and could not continue their schooling. This study was an attempt to examine how one teacher made a shift from the

traditional approach of teaching language to a constructivist approach. The constructivist paradigm takes the perspective that children can be controllers of their own learning and this process will enhance their abilities to reason, solve problems and new acquire knowledge (Bransford et al., 2000).

The negotiating stage was at the heart of Akusi's learning of the integrated literacy approaches. Repeated lesson planning, classroom practice and lesson reflections characterized this. Although all the three concepts of reading, writing and active engagement were introduced at the same time, data indicated that Akusi did not understand them at the same time. At the beginning of the study, data indicated that she first grasped some learner-centered concepts of teaching to read. Data showed that Akusi understood the importance of allowing the children to read what they wanted and as much as they could without being assessed or restricted. There was an indication that she was enjoying the activity very much because she actively and untiringly loaned different supplementary books to students throughout the period of study. She made affirmative suggestions during the planning, as to how the curriculum and the supplementary readers could be integrated in the lessons. She confidently facilitated unrestricted reading and was able to explain why things were happening the way they were with ease. Data showed that when Akusi grasped a concept, her competence was reflected throughout the cyclic process, of lesson planning, presentation and lesson reflection. With constant practice and reflections, data showed that Akusi became competent in this component of learner-centered constructive-based reading instruction.

The second aspect of integrated literacy approaches in which Akusi developed understanding was the concept of journal writing. It was towards the middle of the study that she started showing signs of understanding and appreciating this concept. As already mentioned, journal writing was used to provide children with constant opportunities for unrestricted writing. Early data indicated that she herself detested journal writing. When asked during planning and reflections how she was progressing with her journal writing, her reply was "I usually forget to write in my journal." Likewise, during reflection she would say, "I forgot to ask the children to write in their journals." She made few suggestions as to how we could develop journal writing in children. Through the process of continuing reflection, a change in Akusi's valuing of journal writing started to emerge and consequently she was teaching it with ease. At the end of the study, during post- interview questions, Akusi indicated that she did not like writing. Probably, it could

be concluded that it was difficult for her to teach children to enjoy and appreciate what she herself did not value. Similarly, Borko and Putman (1986) state that teachers cannot give what they don't have.

Data indicated that pupils' active participation in learning was the last concept of the integrated literacy approaches that Akusi grasped. Towards the end of the study, Akusi began demonstrating understanding and appreciation for pupil participation. Her initial definition of participation was, pupils' ability to answer questions correctly. Although there was a high level of student engagement throughout the study, Akusi could not explain clearly her perception of student engagement as it related to the learning process. I had to guide her to reflect on her own learning experiences in real life situations with regard to active involvement and comparing her experiences with those of the children in the classroom. In addition, lesson demonstrations played a role in Akusi's understanding active pupil participation in learning. In the end, there were indications that Akusi understood pupil participation and how it was related to learning. Similarly, I realized as collaborated with Akusi to assist her understand and implement integrated literacy approaches, I was also going through a process of reflection on my practices as a teacher educator, hence I also experienced growth and change in my teaching beliefs.

## My Growth in Understanding Integrated Literacy Approaches

My growth in understanding integrated literacy approaches began with my doctoral studies at Virginia Polytechnic and State University in Curriculum and Instruction in English Education and continued throughout the time I implemented them with Akusi in a real classroom in Malawi. I had acquired the theoretical constructivist-based principles of learning a second language through reading and class discussions. As a teacher educator, I intended to examine how a primary school teacher could utilize the concepts of integrated literacy approaches in practice in Malawi. The idea of using integrated literacy approaches in teaching English as a second language had been relatively easy for me to grasp and acquire theoretically, but assisting somebody to learn and implement them was a long process that influenced me as a teacher educator.

As Akusi and I embarked in co-researching on how to implement integrated literacy approaches in a Malawi setting, the study provided an opportunity for me to reflect on my own

practices as a teacher educator. Before beginning my doctoral studies, my teaching beliefs were just like Akusi founded in the traditional or teacher-centered approach to teaching. Although I had theoretically learned the constructivist approach to learning in the process of taking doctoral courses and reading research and theory, real change had not yet occurred in me as an instructor. I still held knowledge, dispositions and images about teaching which were not compatible with the integrated literacy approaches (but rather the banking system of education that I had experienced previously as a learner and teacher educator). In this system of education, the teacher is the authority of knowledge while the learner is the receiver of knowledge (Freire, 2000). In fact, at the beginning of the studies, I unconsciously assumed the authoritative role while Akusi assumed the subordinate role. For example, in one of the reflection sessions I said,

> Just one favor I want to ask from you. When the children are writing in their journals, I wished if for the coming three weeks, they should not have any restrictions nor any guidance, just tell them to write in their journals anything and keep quiet. I don't know if that will be fine. Don't restrict them to a number of sentences. I would not care what they write, but I know they will write something.

Audio-taped data indicated that I was giving orders and expecting Akusi to follow them. Data also indicated that Akusi could not learn through simply receiving my instruction on what to do. Initially, I did not tap Akusi's knowledge as to how we could best proceed in improving the journal writing in the way that Labaree (2000) claims that teacher educators should help teacher-learners to reflect on their beliefs and knowledge so that the teacher-learners can see the foundation for building upon the new knowledge. I just dictated what I wanted to be done. Akusi passively received my instructions without questioning and did the same to the children in her class. Data revealed that both of us were influenced by the teacher-centered education we had experienced in Malawi in the past, hence we both unconsciously assumed our roles as dictated by the teacher-centered education, that the teacher gives and the learner receives. This revelation from the data helped me to monitor my own traditional approaches and to attempt to use constructivist's approaches through constant practice, reflection and reference to literature review.  I attempted to support Akusi in discovering solutions herself. For example, the following conversation in one of the reflection sessions showed that I had started taking a more constructivism-based approach; I encouraged Akusi to lead in the discussion as follows:

Edith: Today you will start the reflection because I am not an evaluator. I am also learning, I have never implemented integration approaches before.

Akusi: The integration was there. First, we started with writing. Pupils were given freedom to write what they wanted in their journals and I could see that most of them wrote a number of sentences.

Edith: I also noted that some pupils managed to write a paragraph.

Akusi: Then we did some reading. In the reading, for example the passage that was written on the board, they read it and found the main idea of the paragraph, so I thought there was also integration because they could identify which words composed … the main idea. Moreover, they read again from the textbook to find the main ideas from the two paragraphs. Then the last one I wanted them to write, so I gave them questions, which they answered from looking at the picture.

As we continued implementing and reflecting on the lessons, by and by, I developed the understanding of how integrated literacy approaches worked in a real teaching and learning situation. After several collaborative lessons, and as the aspects of integrated literacy approaches continued to unfold, I realized that the way Akusi was learning was the same way I was learning. I could not help Akusi learn a concept I did not understand myself. I was learning through constant collaboration and repeated cyclic reflections with Akusi. We depended upon each other and each had something to contribute. Hence, when we put our efforts together, we were always achieving something and forging ahead with integrated literacy approaches. The following was one of the lesson vignettes I developed when I had gained some understanding of integrated literacy approaches of reading and writing and the student engagement in the English class. Akusi was the observer and she wrote comments for discussion during reflection.

***My Teaching Vignette***

I started the lesson by greeting the children who responded together in unison, "Good morning, teacher." I introduced the subject by saying "It's time for English." Suddenly, there was noise from children talking, noise from bags and paper as they opened their bags to find the English materials that were in their possession, (the journal notebooks and the supplementary readers) and finding a proper sitting position for writing. Most of the boys raised the right knee where they placed their notebooks for easy writing, since they were sitting on the floor. The girls

put their notebooks on their laps; some put their book bags on the lap first, then placed their notebooks on top of the book bags in order to raise the level probably for comfortable writing. This had become a typical response from the children every time the subject was introduced. By this time, the students were accustomed to the idea that English lessons began with writing in the journals. The short noise span was followed by silence as some children straight away started writing in their journals, while others waited for instructions as they stared at me with expectation.

"Take out your journal notebooks, write the date, and then write whatever you want to write today." I gave the students five minutes to write in their journals. While they wrote, Akusi and I looked at them and encouraged them to keep on writing until I told them to stop. It was not possible to move amongst the children while they wrote because there was no space. After five minutes, I asked the students to stop writing and put their notebooks away. While they were doing this, I wrote on the chalkboard a one-verse simple song that I was going to use to introduce the simple sentence.

There was a farmer who had a dog

and Bingo was his name oh!

*Chorus*

B I N G O

- I N G O

 - - N GO

 - - - GO

- - - - O

- - - - -

And Bingo was his name oh! (x6).

(the song is sung six times with the singers spelling the name BINGO then removing letter by letter and replacing them with hand claps until all the letters are removed)

I asked for students' attention and told them that we were going to sing a song and asked if anybody knew the song that was written on the chalkboard. Unfortunately, no one knew it. I asked them to listen while I read the words of the song for the first time. Then the children read the song while I was pointing at the words. Next, I sang it while they listened. Then we sang the song together several times. They mastered the song easily. After they had enjoyed singing the

song, I formed a simple sentence from the words of the song and wrote it on the chalkboard: *A farmer has a dog.* Next, I helped them to read it together aloud. I explained that it was a simple sentence and asked one of the students to identify a verb, which they did. All the children were made to see the verb. I gave two more examples of the simple sentence: *Dogs eat meat. I like school.* Using these examples, I explained two more characteristics of the simple sentence as always starting with a capital letter and ending with a full stop. Then I asked the students to produce their supplementary books and open on the page where they read a story of their choice as a home assignment that was given the previous day. We went outside to do the activity of identifying simple sentences from the stories they read and writing them in their notebooks. The students were allowed to write as many sentences as they could. The activity was done in pairs. At this time, Akusi and I went around helping and marking the pupils' work. In conclusion, the students came together as a group again and we sang the song of "Bingo."

### *Akusi and I Analyzed My Lesson*

During the reflection session, Akusi first commended my lesson by stating that I included reading and writing and that there was maximum participation of learners. Apart from reading and writing activities in the lesson, she noted that I had also integrated music in my lesson, hence expanding the definition of integration. She, however, commented that I could have improved my lesson on introducing the simple sentence. Instead of just telling the children what a simple sentence was, Akusi said I could have developed the simple sentence with the children using word cards and let the children discover the key words and characteristics of a simple sentence themselves. Moreover, with this conclusion, the children could have practiced forming a simple sentence as a whole class before singing the song. We further discussed how we could improve on this lesson next time, and I learnt something from Akusi.

### Summary

This chapter has provided results of the analysis of data that were collected for the single case study. The results suggested that Akusi's understanding and implementation of the integrated literacy approaches was a gradual process of growth that was influenced by a variety of interrelated factors such as the context of the case, reflective teaching, the learning process, the co-researchers' relationship, and experiences in learning.

# CHAPTER 5
## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of this action research study whose purpose was to examine how a teacher acting as a co-researcher came to understand the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches in an English class in Malawi as a way of increasing teacher knowledge and improving approaches to teaching English as a second language. The summary is presented by first giving the statement of the problem and a brief explanation of why I was interested in studying this topic. Then I present a brief summary of how the study was carried out and its findings, followed by an epilogue of the study and a discussion of the feasibility of integrated literacy approaches in Malawi. Finally, implications of the study for teacher education in Malawi and recommendation for future studies are discussed.

The original motivation to do this action research study came about after being empowered professionally through a doctoral degree program in Instruction and Curriculum in English Education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in the United States of America. As a teacher educator of English education, I had a natural desire to contribute to the improvement of teacher learning in Malawi as one way of improving children's learning English as a second language. The impetus of the study was based on the problem of low primary school learner achievement in English education in Malawi, as revealed by five consecutive cross-national studies of Williams (1993), Ministry of Education and UNICEF (1998), Stuart (2002), Banda et al (2001) and Kishindo et al., (2005). English is an important language in Malawi. It is the official language of government, commerce and education. For this reason, it is a mandatory subject as stipulated by government policy (Williams, 2002), and as stated in the primary school curriculum general objectives. It is the desire of Ministry of Education that every child should acquired basic communication skills in English for literacy by the end of the eight-year primary school course (Ministry of Education, 1991). This objective is rarely achieved. To the contrary, English is one of the lowest achieved subjects in the schools. Thus, there is a significant need for improved approaches to English education in Malawi.

Although there are several factors that contribute to the low English achievement, Williams (1993) found that teacher practices (particularly the dominant traditional teacher-centered approaches used to teach English) contributed greatly to children's low achievement in

English. Teacher-centered traditional approaches are believed to be neither appropriate nor effective for language learning because they put the learner in a passive role. Language learning is believed to be an on-going active process; hence, teaching approaches that boost active learning are believed to be more effective in this endeavor (Bransford et al., 2000; Williams, 2002). Active learning is based on the new science of learning that is grounded in constructivist's models of teaching and learning. Regrettably, although the Malawi curriculum is expected to be child-centered and teachers claimed to base their teaching on learner-centered approaches, in practice, the traditional approaches to teach English are still dominant in the classrooms (Ministry of Education and UNICEF, 1998; Stuart, 2002; Williams, 2002). Additionally, (Stuart & Kunje, 2000) reported that this trend is also reflected in primary teacher education programs in Malawi. A study of teacher education found that teacher training colleges in Malawi used the traditional teacher-centered or direct teaching methods (Stuart & Kunje, 2000).

McIntyre and Byrd (2000) took the position that teachers cannot give what they don't have. That is, teachers who do not fully understand learner-centered, constructivist approaches to teaching cannot use them. Based on these related teacher and learner findings, this study explored the issue of children's low English achievement by focusing on the teacher. McIntyre and Byrd (2000) supported the idea that any efforts that seek to improve children's learning should improve teaching and the teacher first. Moreover, in the absence of English speaking models and literacy materials in children's home environments in Malawi (Banda et al., 2001), schools are almost the only source of children's learning English. A foundational assumption for this study is that improving teacher quality can have a positive impact on children's achievement, specifically in English.

The concept of leaner-centered integrated literacy approaches was introduced through an action research study conducted between a primary school teacher and myself (a teacher educator). The primary teacher's name was Mrs. Akusi Teketeka (pseudonym), and she served in the role of co-researcher. The study was conducted at a full primary school in standard six English language classes. Akusi and I collaboratively carried out a reflective teaching process for English language lessons in standard six for thirteen weeks. Through the analysis of data, I examined how Akusi was understanding and implementing the integrated literacy approaches in her class.

Akusi and I discussed integration concepts, and then planned how to present lessons in the classroom. Akusi presented the lessons while I observed and collected lesson observation summaries. At the end of each lesson, we jointly reflected on what transpired in the lesson and made decisions for the next lesson. The discussions conducted during lesson planning and reflections were audio taped. These together with the lesson summaries, as well as pre- and post-interviews, constituted the data source for analysis. Data analysis from these sources showed how Akusi systematically developed the understanding and implementation of integrated literacy approaches.

The major findings of the study revealed that Akusi understood and successfully implemented the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches in an English class in Malawi. However, this was a long and gradual process, and embedded in this process were other sub interlaced processes and factors that revealed elements and gaps in Akusi's understanding. For example, what she learned in theory about the integrated literacy approaches did not automatically translate into practice. Teacher mastery of learner-centered integrated literacy practices involved a repeated cyclic process of reflective teaching. It was also revealed that learner-centered integrated literacy approaches are feasible in Malawi under certain conditions that include (a) collaboration, (b) reflective teaching, (c) teacher willingness to learn,(d) school management, and (e) teaching and learning materials - particularly texts for student reading. In the absence of these conditions, it may be impossible to implement these approaches.

The action research study assisted Akusi in increasing her theoretical knowledge and improving her practice as regards teaching English using the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches. Akusi's understanding of the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches was supported by her own epilogue as portrayed below.

**Akusi's Epilogue**

Akusi's epilogue was an indicator that the study successfully illuminated some of the factors involved in teacher learning. The action research Akusi and I conducted ended on 2$^{nd}$ April 2004 and we went our separate ways for nine months. Then after I had finished data analysis and finalized the findings, I made an initiative to find out what Akusi was doing in English lessons, that is, if there was anything she cherished from the integrated literacy

approaches study, we did together for thirteen weeks. On 12<sup>th</sup> January 2005, I had the opportunity to informally chat with Akusi to post-examine the study we conducted together. The discussion took place in a sitting room at Akusi's home. We sat facing each other while we talked about our experiences with integrated literacy approaches.

Akusi humbly explained that she continued with everything we were doing (that was journal writing and guided but unrestricted reading) and that there was high active participation by children. They mostly learned through group and pair work activities. The only weakness she had was that she had not yet developed writing interest herself; she found it difficult to enjoy writing. She confessed that integrated literacy approaches made teaching English as a second language and managing an extra large class easier because children were learning on their own in organized groups or pairs most of the times.

She started explaining about group work. She realized that, when children worked in groups or pair work, there was maximum participation as compared to question and answer that previously dominated her teaching practice. She explained that question and answer involved one to one teaching and that it was not possible to cover all the 78 children; as a result, many children were passive. They were denied the opportunity to answer or participate in the lesson activities. Children developed greater interest in learning when working in groups, and Akusi's role was facilitation. In addition, she explained that children became used to marking and checking their own work and that Akusi's responsibility was to check their work once in a while to follow what they were doing in order to give a feed back and not to grade them. I further explained that the approaches she was employing allowed children to be in control of their learning and it assisted them with metacognition strategies that would allow them to predict their own performance on various tasks (Bransford et al., 2000).

Secondly, Akusi explained that she continued with the journal writing. She observed that children enjoyed the journal writing activity very much. She realized that her role in this activity was to give encouragement and help pupils learn from their own writing. She reported that one day she had the honor of being visited by the Primary School Education Advisor (PEA). During lesson observation, the PEA did not understand why the children first wrote in a notebook and put it away and took another one in the same lesson to be used for other written tasks. The usual practice is that each subject is assigned one notebook. Akusi explained to the PEA that it was

journal writing; she explained to the PEA, "Children just write what they want; I don't mark their work. The purpose of this journal writing is just to make them write what they want."

She asserted that the PEA was impressed with her lesson, and he wondered where and how she obtained the knowledge and the new approaches. He wished these were extended to other schools. Akusi told him about the learner-centered integrated literacy approach study she was involved in. She further explained to the PEA that she no longer solely depends on the English curriculum book for her reading lessons, but that she allows children to read other books, including the supplementary readers and any other literature she may found useful, such as newspapers and magazines. She explained that just as she allows children to write what they wanted, she also guides and encourages them to read what they want. Her role is to create activities that help the children to reflect on what they are reading. She allows the students to take the books home; after three days they bring the books back to exchange for another book. Akusi explained to the PEA how she integrates the supplementary books with the syllabus and teachers' guide. I asked Akusi where she got the supplementary books because, after the end of the study, we returned the books to the college library. At that point, the children had only their curriculum books, which they were not allowed to carry home. Instead, the books were kept in the school's bookstore room and collected daily for classroom use.

Akusi told me that since the study ended she stored the pupils curriculum books in the primary school's storeroom at their school Kapeni Demonstration Primary School. One day while collecting the curriculum books from the storeroom, she noticed a pile of boxes that were similar to the ones that contained the supplementary books we were using at the college classroom during the study. When Akusi inquired from the head teacher about the contents of the boxes, the head teacher said that she did not know what was in there and explained that the boxes had been there for a long time. However, she gave Akusi permission to check the contents of the boxes. The boxes proved that they had been dormant by the amount of dust they had accumulated on their tops. To her amazement, the boxes contain many supplementary English books for standards three to eight. The books looked new and untampered with. With confidence, Akusi claimed the books for use in her class. Akusi learnt that these books were distributed to all primary schools in Blantyre district some years back.

After this discovery, during a short meeting, the head teacher announced the presence of the books and invited all the teachers to use the supplementary books for their classes. The other

teachers declined, saying that it was going to waste their time and that they would not be able to finish reading their English curriculum books that were prescribed for their classes. Hence, only Akusi's took the challenge to use the supplementary reader; she knew she was empowered. Akusi has since joined her colleagues in the old system of sharing subjects in one class. She wished she had remained with her own class because the other standard six teachers did not approve of her new learner-centered approaches towards the teaching of English as a second language. They claim that her students would not finish reading the prescribed curriculum with the integrated literacy approaches. To the contrary, Akusi discovered that integrated literacy approaches were more effective and they simplified teaching and learning, especially in a large class, as compared to the traditional method of teaching she used before. Her students had since moved to standard seven, and they wished she had gone with them. At the time of this post-study discussion, the students were in the first week of standard seven. According to her assessment, the children's English language improved tremendously with the integrated literacy approaches.

Finally, Akusi expressed appreciation about seeing the concrete results in her participating in the research study of integrated literacy approaches in teaching English as a second language. Akusi's understanding of integrated literacy approaches empowered her to teach English with confidence; her knowledge about teaching has changed positively.

I was encouraged that Akusi found integrated literacy approaches beneficial in teaching and learning English. Apart from Akusi's remarks that the intervention affected the students positively, her statement that it made teaching and learning English easier in a large class was encouraging. However, Akusi may not sustain her new knowledge and teaching practice without continued support. Considering that she is alone in a large group of other teachers who have not had the opportunity to experience the integrated literacy approaches, the degree to which she will continue to utilize what she learned is questionable. Integrated literacy approaches may not be a panacea but are probably part of a solution in improving learning of English in Malawi where large classes are prevalent. Integrated literacy approaches coupled with action research can profoundly bring positive changes towards the teaching of English.

In the process of guiding and examining how Akusi was learning the theories of integrated literacy approaches, I was also going through a learning process and I benefited from the study. In the course of attempting to facilitate Akusi's learning, I was teaching myself and reflecting on my own practice as well. I also have improved my teaching practice in English

education with the adoption of the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches in my classes of Batchelor of Education Degree, teacher educator student teachers, at Domasi College of Education. Finally, I learnt from the study that implementing integrated literacy approaches is feasible under certain conditions. However, there are also conditions that might be against using such approaches in the current school context in Malawi. The conditions are presented in the following discussion.

## Discussion of Findings

### *Conditions that Supported Integrated Literacy Approaches*

In this study the research question, " How does a teacher acting as a co-researcher come to understand integrated literacy approaches?" I learnt that integrated literacy approaches are feasible and can be applied in any primary school in Malawi. Four main conditions contributed to this claim. These were (a) teacher's willingness to learn, spend extra time and taking risks, (b) school management, (c) collaborative inquiry, and (d) availability of teaching and learning materials. The following is the discussion of each of these conditions

*Teacher's willingness to learn, spend extra time and take risks.* In this study, willingness to learn meant that the teacher was interested in learning innovative ideas about integrated literacy approaches. Learning to teach is not an event, but rather a continuous process of learning across ones teaching career ( Bransford et al., 2000 ), hence, it is the  willingness to be a life long learner.  It is like a seed that is planted, germinates, gradually grows big and matures and produces fruit in its lifetime because of continuous watering and nourishing. Willingness to learn is important it lays a foundation for sustained learning.

Out of eight teachers that were identified for selection to participate in the study, only Akusi qualified to become the co-researcher because she showed interest in learning to improve her teaching. Further, her interest was sustained throughout the study and continued beyond the study. The other the seven teachers demonstrated what I consider to be stereotypical thinking among teachers in Malawi; they only considered the study from an extrinsic perspective, to gain financial rewards. Extrinsic motivation is temporally in nature.

Akusi had demonstrated that she was willing to learn. She had a personal interest in self-improvement. For example, Akusi showed curiosity right at the beginning during the co-

researcher's selection interview. She stated clearly that she was ready to participate in the study because she believed that participating in researches had potential of increasing one's knowledge about teaching and learning. Akusi further explained that she had previously participated in a research study; hence, she knew the value of such an opportunity. As the study progressed, Akusi demonstrated consistent interest. She actively participated in all the lesson preparations and reflections and did lesson presentations.

Akusi provided constructive ideas as to how we could carry out specific activities. For example, when we were planning to introduce journal writing, Akusi knew that the children could not write in their journals straight away because they did not know English very well. Therefore, she suggested that she should first tell the children a story, then ask them to write anything they could pick from the story. Her idea worked very well during the lesson presentation. The children wrote in their journals with enthusiasm. Akusi's suggestion supports Krashen's input hypothesis theory which emphasizes that second language learners should be given optimal comprehensible contextulized in put that helps the learners to focus on meaning while attending to form (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Moreover, Akusi at her own initiative committed herself to manage the supplementary books by lending them to the children and allowing the children to take the books home. She kept a record of the number of books each child was reading. She encouraged the children to read the books by giving them activities that enhanced reading. For example, one time she asked the children to narrate to each other what they had read as an introduction of a lesson. This self-initiative was also an indication of interest.

Akusi's personal interest was an intrinsic motivation that ultimately sustained her involvement in the study (Bransford et al., 2000; Ormrod, 1999). Motivation is believed to be the most influential factor in learning (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Ormrod (1999) further explained that people, who are interested in a particular topic or activity, show greater cognitive engagement by processing information in a meaningful and elaborate fashion. They are able to relate to things they already know, generate their own examples and identify potential applications. Willingness to learn possibly was one of the factors that sustained Akusi to be engaged in the study from the beginning to the end.

Another characteristic of Akusi's interest was her willingness to take risks. A risk could be defined as getting out of one's comfort zone with a purpose of trying to do things differently or to do things that are more challenging. Risk taking was important because there was no way

integrated literacy approaches could have been learned by Akusi without taking risks. Akusi's acceptance to implement integrated literacy approaches implied taking risks, to change her English instruction from behavioral-based model of teaching to constructivists-based learner-centered model. Taking the risk to make a dramatic change away from her usual teaching practices was not automatic for Akusi; it took some encouragement, much elaboration of the purpose of the study and assurance that she was secure.

At the beginning of the study, Akusi felt insecure about modifying the fixed lesson procedures from the teacher's guide upon which she based her lessons. For instance, she was uncomfortable about removing the routine sentence-segment drills in lesson introductions and replacing them with journal writing activity. Akusi said that the PEA could not accept this method of introducing a lesson.  This implied that Akusi believed there was only one way of presenting lessons as prescribed by the teacher's guide. After being assured that all the responsible people were aware of the study (thus the District Education Manager and the Primary School Advisor), and elaborating on the purpose of the study, Akusi felt safer about taking the risk of implementing the journal writing strategy.

Akusi also demonstrated risk taking at her own initiative when she borrowed supplementary books and allowed the students to take the books to read at home. The school policy, prohibited children from taking textbooks to their homes (as a way of keeping the books secure). Akusi took the risk in trusting the learners, and they proved they could be trusted.

Lastly, Akusi's willingness to spend extra time made it possible for her to learn about the practice of integrated literacy approaches. Extra time in this sense meant time in addition to her normal teaching time. This was important because Akusi had to gain solid understanding of and practice the integrated literacy approach concepts before she could implement them in the classroom. Journal writing and reading the supplementary readers were the primary activities that dominated the writing and reading lessons respectively. The collaborative lesson planning and reflections required Akusi and I to make concerted decisions. To make such decisions lengthy discussions were involved and this process required a great deal of time. In each planning session, our collaborative work on determining what strategies to be used in the following lesson determined how much time Akusi was going to spend to present the lesson. (The Standard English lesson was expected to last 30 minutes, but in this study, we adjusted the teaching and learning periods to one-hour lesson to have enough time to effectively practice what

we planned). Collaborative reflections on lessons and planning for the next lesson were conducted after Akusi had finished teaching and had dismissed the children, a time many teachers had left for the day.

*School management support.* School management is the authority that oversees administrative and professional activities at different levels depending on the education system of a particular country. In the case of Malawi, Ministry of Education through a hierarchical line of authority centrally controls various government learning institutions, including public primary schools like Kapeni (Farrant, 1991). Authority begins at national and goes down to divisions, districts, zones and lastly the school level. The power is like water that trickles from the top of the mountain, goes down through ponds, and meanders down into the valley to the school where policies are implemented. The head teacher is the manager at school level. Head teachers ensure that the policies laid down by Ministry of Education are effectively and efficiently implemented (Farrant, 1991).

School management support at all these levels was important to the success of this study. Ministry of Education had an already established policy that allowed education research studies to be carried out in schools. For that reason the District Manager for Blantyre granted permission for the study to be carried out in any of the schools in the district. The Primary Education Advisor was willing to assist in identifying the co-researcher. Finally, the head teacher of Kapeni primary school, the venue of the study, assisted in identifying a class for the study. In order to succeed in conducting this study, a reasonable class size was needed; it was not going to be possible to engage students in collaborative literacy work if they and the teacher could not move around the classroom because it was too full.

Identifying a class for the integrated literacy approaches implementation was a little bit complicated; it took the head teacher's authority and experience to identify a suitable class for the study. In their normal operations, Akusi the co-researcher was assigned to a large departmentalized standard six class of 167 students. In departmentalized classes, typically three teachers took separate subjects and taught all of the students as a whole group in turns, despite the fact that in Malawi, the recommended class size is 60 per teacher (Ministry of Education and UNICEF, 1998). After consultation about this research project, the head teacher in her capacity ordered that the class be split into three manageable classes and that each teacher should handle a class single handedly. Akusi's two colleagues did not receive this arrangement with favor, but

since it was the head teacher's word and in line with primary school teaching policy, this alteration in the regular routine was accomplished with relative ease. Akusi and I were allowed to use the classroom and unfortunately, the other two classes had to learn under trees.

Soon after the study commenced, we experienced a problem. It rained on consecutive days hence; the other two classes naturally came back into the classroom seeking shelter. Since it was rainy season, it was likely that such episodes of having inconsistent class size would recur. The head teacher came to our rescue again. She gave tips as to how to secure a better accommodation for the research class at Blantyre Teacher's College. The college, lying adjacent to the primary school, was like a mother to Kapeni Primary Demonstration School. The principal of Blantyre Teacher Training College received the request positively and it resulted in all the three classes securing classrooms in one of college classroom blocks. The management of Blantyre Teacher's College extended their gesture by offering an office for Akusi and I to use for our out-of class research activities. As if not enough, the college management allowed us to borrow supplementary reading books form their library. The books were supplementary to the curriculum books that students and teachers used everyday for their lessons. Without management intervention, the setting of the classroom would have negatively affected the study's feasibility.

*Collaborative inquiry.* Collaborative inquiry is another condition that contributed to the feasibility to implement the new approaches of integrated literacy in Malawi. To collaborate means to work jointly.  According to Arhar et al., (2001), inquiry is " the process by which a person follows one's curiosity until the puzzle is solved or abandoned; inquiry can develop into research if it becomes systematic and self-critical and is made public" (p. 288). Akusi and I joined and worked together in inquiring about integrated literacy approaches in teaching English as a foreign language in a standard six Malawi classroom.

As a teacher educator, I had just acquired theoretical knowledge about integrated literacy approaches from my doctoral studies at Virginia Polytechnic and State University with the aim of contributing to the improvement in teaching English as a second language in Malawi. My examination of the literature on approaches to teaching English as a second language indicated that integrated literacy approaches were more effective than the traditional approaches we were using in our Malawi primary school English classes.  Previously, as a teacher educator in Malawi, I would have transmitted this knowledge to the primary school teachers through

workshops and lecturers, outside of the classroom because this approach to teacher education was familiar to me. My teaching beliefs (just like those of Akusi) were grounded in the traditional approaches based on structural and behavioral psychology (Menyuk, 2003). These traditional approaches to teaching English as a second language assume the transmission style of instruction combined with low-level question and answer sessions, grammatical analysis and pattern drills (Crawford, 2003). The learner is the receiver of knowledge and assumes a passive role in learning situations.

Collaborative inquiry was important because it provided an opportunity for the researcher to experience aspects that are absent in teacher education in Malawi. Firstly, through collaborative inquiry, Akusi showed that she was learning one concept at a time although all the concepts were introduced at the same time. Secondly, collaborative inquiry showed that Akusi and I were in a complementary relationship. Thirdly, as we collaboratively inquired, it revealed the support Akusi and I accorded each other in different situations. Lastly, Collaborative inquiry helped Akusi and I to fill the gap that separates theory and practice.

Collaborative inquiry alongside integrated literacy approaches are learner-centered concepts based on cognitive and social constructivism models in which learning is viewed as an active process of negotiating what the learners already know with what they don't know (Crawford, 2003). Further, social constructivists find group problem solving to be a superior learning experience than individual, isolated learning (Pollard, 2001). Thus, I facilitated Akusi's active engagement by encouraging her to function in a cooperative and inclusionary way whilst learning the integrated literacy approaches through collaborative inquiry. Early on, I encouraged Akusi in reflecting upon the behaviorist philosophies on which she based her teaching and learning. I provided information on constructivist philosophies (which were at the foundation of the integrated literacy approaches), and we compared the two. From the constructive perspective, we designed integrated literacy lessons; then discussed the results. This was done through reflective teaching. Reflective teaching was a cyclical process that involved Akusi and I in monitor, evaluating and revising our practice through lesson planning, presentation and lesson reflection on a continuous basis (Pollard, 2001).

During lesson reflections, Akusi and I examined and discussed the actions we needed to take in order to form a foundation to support integrated literacy approaches. For example, I alternately initiated reflection with the following questions based on the initial class teaching

observation, "Why do you check and grade pupils work all the time? Why do you prohibit pupils from talking but prefer to have them sit quietly in rows waiting for you to indicate when and what to talk about? Why do you tell them what to do all the time? Why are pupils' reading and writing restricted to answering and writing comprehension questions and usually of low-level learning? Why is reading restricted to one curriculum book only?" Akusi consistently provided solid explanations for her actions, with most of these explanations relating to what she was taught in her teacher education program, and the ways in which the authorities expected her to follow what was written in the teachers' guide. Then, we engaged in discussions how integrated literacy instructional approaches could be used to support the students reading and writing development in a more active way. Next, we discussed and examined how we could try out the integrated literacy approaches using the same curriculum by incorporating the approaches and modifying the pattern in the teachers' guide wherever necessary. Then, Akusi tried to implement them in a real lesson.

Secondly, through collaborative inquiry and reflections, data revealed that Akusi was gradually learning one concept at a time, despite that all the concepts were introduced at the same time. She grasped the concept of teaching reading in the learner-centered way early. She understood the concept of allowing children to select what they wanted to read without grading them and she provided them with various texts for reading, like the supplementary readers. She brought old newspapers and magazines and creatively developed ideas for how the reading could be incorporated in the lesson. The second concept she grasped was learner-centered writing. It took some time for her to understand the idea behind journal writing. Journal writing was used to provide children with constant unstructured writing. Early data indicated that she herself detested writing and it was reflected throughout the cyclic process of planning, presentation and reflection. For example, during lesson planning for lessons, she was not making many suggestions as to how to improve on journal writing, and during lesson reflection, she usually expressed her sentiments that she forgot to write in her own journal and she also forgot to make the children write in their journals. With constant reflections through collaborative inquiry, improvements in understanding journal writing started to emerge. Collaboration revealed that when Akusi grasped or misunderstood an integration concept, her competence or misconception was reflected throughout the cyclic process of lesson planning, presentation and reflection.

Thirdly, as we collaboratively inquired, Akusi and I supported each other in many ways. Collaborative inquiry reduced the insecurity that came with implementing innovations. Akusi and I attempted to make an improvement in the way English was taught; that is shifting from the traditional approaches to constructivist's learner-centered approaches of integrated literacy. Making change can be threatening ( Fullan, 1982). Akusi and I needed each other's support in taking the risk to start teaching reading and writing in the learner-centered away. The learner-centered approach required that children read and write about what they were interested in (as opposed to the usual practice whereby the teacher had to always decide what they would read or write). Akusi expressed fear that the suggested activities; that were to replace her usual practice were not going to work and that her supervisor the Primary school Advisor was not going to approve of modifications of what was in the teacher's guide. She feared that the children did not have adequate English proficiency to allow them to write in journals. However, through collaborative inquiry we encouraged each other to try it, whether it worked or not. Fortunately, I was in a position, which I was able to provide elaboration on the purpose of the study and the security measures that were put in place that allowed for the recommended instruction modifications. Together, our fears were settled and that we both bore the consequences of our decision, allowing the study to move forward.

As it turned out, our knowledge and experiences complemented each other, and this phenomenon helped support the study. Through the process of collaborative inquiry, we were afforded the opportunity to weave together our complementary knowledge and experiences to maximize the learning of integrated literacy approaches. Akusi was a primary school teacher with knowledge and up-to-date practical experiences about teaching young children in the region of Malawi in which the study was conducted. I joined the study as a teacher educator with up-to-date about literacy teaching and experience in teacher education; however, my perspective on primary school teaching was dated. We planned lessons together and Akusi presented the lesson to a large class with ease while I observed. Afterwards in a reflective session, we discussed what transpired in the lesson and what our next action was going to be.

The collaborative inquiry process made it possible for our ideas to build together. When I initially suggested that students should start journal writing, Akusi was concerned that her students did not know enough English to enable them to write in journals. She made a suggestion on how we could proceed to the next level of journal writing by encouraging the children to start

writing in short sentences and move away from one word listing and drawings. It was commonplace for our knowledge and experiences to come together in a complementary fashion, hence providing support for each other's dilemmas and misconceptions.

*Teaching and learning materials.* Availability of teaching and learning materials also contributed to the practicability of integrated literacy approaches. Teaching and learning materials are all the items a teacher uses to facilitate student's learning in the classroom. Some examples of teaching and learning aids include real objects, models, pictures, text books, diagrams, chalkboard, notebooks and charts, just to mention a few. Teaching and learning materials were important because they support teaching and learning English and can be used to make instruction more effective. The teaching and learning materials that Akusi and I used most often were notebooks, English curriculum textbooks, supplementary readers, old newspapers, chalk and chalkboard.

Text materials were the most important because the research focused on reading and writing only. Reading and writing, generally dealt with text. Apart from learning to read and write, the children were also attempting to learn English as a foreign Language in an environment where there were no English speaking models with whom the students had daily contact and regular interaction. Hence, in the absence of English speaking models in Malawi, the text materials provided input to maximize interaction with the English language. Second language acquisition theories also emphasize the importance of input as vehicle for language growth (Menyuk, 2003). It is also believed that children appear to learn more words quickly and incidentally through repeated exposure during reading and writing than through direct instruction (Farris, 2001).

Two types of text were used; these were the curriculum English textbook and supplementary readers. The curriculum textbook was prescribed by the national syllabus for standard six and each child was supposed to receive one. Unfortunately, in this class (and almost every classroom in Malawi), there were not nearly enough books for all the students. In this particular classroom, it was necessary for three to share one book. At the beginning of the study, Akusi utilized the teacher's guide as the foundation for all of her English lessons in these curriculum textbooks. As already mentioned this is a traditional method for teaching English in Malawi and is based upon the theories of structural and behavioral psychologists (Menyuk, 2003). Children read selected paragraphs as prescribed by the teachers' guide in order to answer

questions, aurally or in written form during the study, Akusi continued to make use of the curriculum textbooks, but they were used in ways other than oral and written recitation.

The other types of text used during the study were supplementary readers borrowed from Blantyre Teacher's College library. They were called supplementary readers because they were meant to supplement the curriculum textbook in teaching and learning English. These books were in plentiful and consisted of a variety of books with different tittles and authors. Literacy research has demonstrated that when teachers encourage and guide children to engage in extensive reading and writing, they get a wider scope of literacy, strengthen their reading skills, vocabulary, and content knowledge, and increase the level of imagination (Ohanian, 2001). The presence of the supplementary readers, curriculum English textbooks and the old newspapers provided the children with an opportunity to select what they wanted to read.

In addition to the reading tasks, students were also given the opportunity to practice low-stakes writing in their special notebook through unstructured journal writing activity. Reading and writing were introduced at the same time because they are flip sides of a coin; they constitute a parallel process of meaning construction because reading is decoding written language and writing is producing written language (Heller, 1995). In their writing activities, the students decided what they wanted to write and were not graded. The purpose was to provide opportunities for the children to write about their interests so that they could encounter the " flip side" of getting meaning from reading text and actually develop the kind of thinking required to create text that carries meaning (Heller, 1995). The reading and writing were learner-centered because (at their own pace and level of development), each child constructed knowledge based upon prior knowledge through reading and writing text of their own choice.

In addition to the curriculum textbooks and supplementary books, the children read from old newspapers which Akusi and I brought from our homes. The purpose was to give the children a broad experience with various texts so that learning to read and write could come as naturally as language learning.  Save the Children (US) (2000) supports the idea of using the environment as a source of a variety of instructional resources that can support classroom teaching and learning. Akusi's responsibility was to facilitate the reading and writing activities to provide the opportunity for the children to develop a reading and writing culture.

The last teaching and learning material used was the chalkboard. The classroom had a good spacious chalkboard that stretched from one side of the wall to the other in front of the

room. The chalkboard was formed from concrete and painted black, but it did not have a very smooth surface. In the absence of teaching and learning aids in Malawi schools, the chalkboard and chalk are the most readily available teaching and learning aids that are provided for in many schools (Save the Children (US), 2000). Akusi used the chalkboard for drawing the attention of the children. For instance, she used the chalkboard to point out English grammatical information, vocabulary meanings, summaries, and labeling the subject name, date and enrollment. The availability of the chalkboard and the curriculum textbooks, supplementary books, and newspapers was one of the important conditions that facilitated the practice of integrated literacy in this study.

**Barriers to the Development of Integrated Literacy Approaches**

This collaborative research study with Akusi, showed that literacy approaches may be feasible in Malawi if the necessary supporting conditions can be satisfied. However, these findings gave rise to further questions as regards the practicability in a Malawi situation. Several barriers are eminent in the school context in Malawi. A barrier can be considered anything that prevents progress or success (Oxford, 1996). Because there are a variety of barriers that may make implementation of integrated literacy instruction difficult in Malawi, these barriers deserve discussion. Possible barriers have been teased out in the following discussion, based upon guiding questions.

1. How can teachers be convinced that they can do professional development activities without being rewarded financially?
2. What time frame is required in order to learn and gain expertise in the practice of integrated literacy approaches?
3. Can there be collaboration between primary school teachers and teacher educators, and between primary school teachers themselves, for the purpose of supporting the learning and implementation of integrated literacy approaches?
4. Can adequate materials be located for use in facilitating the learning of English through integrated literacy approaches?
5. How can school management authorities provide support for Malawi teachers' learning and practice of integrated literacy approaches?

*Convincing teachers to engage in professional development.* In Malawi, teachers equate financial rewards with continuing teacher education for professional development. The Malawi culture is the one in which teachers have received financial reward for spending their time and energy on professional development activities, and they now expect to be paid for each "extra" activity. This is a serious barrier to learning and implementation of integrated literacy approaches in Malawi English classrooms. There are no available funds in Malawi for training thousands of primary teachers in improving their English language instruction by learning and implementing integrated literacy methods of instruction.

In the case of this study, the primary benefit was professional growth and development for Akusi and myself; there were no financial gains. Akusi and I collaboratively studied my research question: " How does a teacher acting as a co-researcher come to understand and implement integrated literacy approaches in a Malawi English Classroom?" Akusi demonstrated willingness to engage in the study and to learn for the purpose of her own professional development. Professional development is defined here, as any teacher's learning activity whose objective is to improve teaching practice, which ultimately improves learning in the classroom.

Lack of interest for learning new teaching methods was evident during the process of searching for an eligible primary school teacher who could become a co-researcher in this study. The search process took much longer than expected when several eligible candidates declined to participate because there were no financial benefits attached to the study. After a long search, Akusi, a teacher in the Kapeni demonstration school, decided to participate in the study. Akusi taught in a primary school that was attached to Blantyre Teacher Training College. Because of the connection to Blantyre Teacher Training College, Akusi was frequently exposed to research studies and she even had previous experiences with research. Her knowledge of research and previous experience with research contributed to her perspective on the value of research and the need to engage in continuous learning in teaching profession.

It is easy to say that every teacher should have the desire to participate in research that may lead to improved methods of teaching in Malawi. It would be wonderful if all teachers were interested in learning about their professions continuously. Nevertheless, this was not the context encountered in Malawi. The demonstrated unwillingness to learn about new strategies among potential study participants clearly represents a barrier to the implementation of integrated literacy approaches in Malawi's primary schools. This study suggested that learning to

implement integrated literacy approaches was a slow developmental process in which the teacher first tried one strategy until she became comfortable with using the two, and so forth. If teachers are completely unwilling to collaboratively learn and practice a new approach to English instruction for the purpose of supporting a fellow Malawian in completing a dissertation, it would seem that there is very little chance that teachers will be willing to voluntary learn new approaches of this kind for the sake of improving their teaching practices.

The teachers initially contacted about the study were unwilling to participate because they were not going to be paid. The equating of financial rewards with willingness to learn is a serious barrier. Teachers cannot be paid for continuing to learn and improve their teaching practice. Continued learning is the lifeblood of the career life of an effective teacher. Teachers cannot depend on initial training to suffice all their needs in the teaching career in this ever-changing world  (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992). A teacher who does not have a desire to learn is like stagnant water in a dam that has no inlet or out let, it soon gets stale and dry up. Professional development activities are like an inlet of fresh waters into a dam, which through an out let gives fresh waters, in the form of improved learning for the students. Teachers in Malawi do earn very low salaries and they are always in search of additional ways of earning money. The culture of public schools is one in which contemporary academic external researchers have often provided financial support for teachers who participate in research studies. Thus, it is not surprising that these teachers asked for financial rewards for their participation in the study. On the other hand, it was surprising that the teachers were simply not willing to spend their time working with a researcher on learning and implementing new strategies if there was no possibility of financial gain. If Malawian teachers cannot become willing to learn and implement new strategies to improve their teaching and the learning experience of Malawian youth without financial rewards, the future of education in Malawi would appear to be rather depressing.

I believe that the traditional course-based approach to teacher learning in Malawi may have contributed to the attitude of primary school teachers about participating in the study. This strategy has dominated the delivery of professional development activities in developing countries including Malawi, to the expense of other important strategies such as the notion of teacher researcher (Oldroyd & Hall, 1991). In this traditional approach, teachers are required to leave their schools in order to attend courses lasting one to two weeks that are meant to improve their practices. Unfortunately, teachers do not get high levels of professional growth satisfaction

from these course-based approaches. However, they are paid for their participation in form of allowances and honorariums, and have come to expect financial benefits to associate with engaging in learning for the purpose of improving their teaching.

These types of course-based approaches to teacher development, although useful in some ways, have some weaknesses. For example, teachers often do not obtain intrinsic benefits; in many cases, the course content does not have relevance to their practical teaching contexts and the lecturers and workshops are not tailored to the needs of teachers in their own practice (Bransford et al., 2000). Many of these courses concentration is on theory hence, lack demonstration, practice feedback and classroom application (Joyce & Showers, 1988). Moreover, the course-based courses are centralized, thus, only a few teachers have the opportunity to attend and often, the same teachers are invited to attend. These perpetual attendees are expected to extend the acquired knowledge to other teachers back in their schools. Regrettably, this is not possible because the attendees are not taught how to teach their colleagues who remain behind and these colleagues may treat the teachers who receive training with suspicion. Teachers who received training often extend the knowledge in the form of a brief report of what they did during staff meetings (Taylor, 1996). Finally, course-based professional activities are usually unbeneficial because teachers accumulate unrelated ad hoc knowledge that lack continuation (Bell & Day, 1991). Since the course-based professional strategy has dominated the field of professional development in Malawi for many years, and teachers are very accustomed to receiving payment for participating in learning activities, it is not surprising that teachers were not interested in participating in my dissertation study if they were not going to get paid.

The tendency to look at the monetary benefits in professional development activities is compounded by lack of incentives for teacher improvement. Poor conditions of employment and low salaries have contributed to the teachers' lack of motivation in the teaching profession in Malawi (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2000). Teachers in Malawi public primary schools lack career progression and they get very low salaries; for that reason most teachers struggle in order to make financial ends meet. Therefore, when an opportunity rises to earn a little bit more money, they grab it. For example, some teachers give remedial lessons to students for a fee as a means of making extra money, Many teachers engage in small business ventures that interfere with their efficiency in teaching. Where incentives are lacking, the desire to learn more to

improve classroom practice decreases (Hargeaves & Fullan, 1992). In Malawi, teacher concentration is on how to survive.

External researchers introduced another factor that may have contributed to teacher's lack of willingness to participate in a learning activity. External researchers include formal academic or traditional researchers from higher education institutions like universities or other education researchers. It has been common for researchers, for whatever reason, to promise financial rewards to teachers for providing the information their research requires. Naturally, teachers in Malawi have been willing to comply with these researchers because of their financial status. Having had experience of this kind, teachers have developed the perspective that research is only conducted by outsiders who are willing to pay fees for receiving information. Teachers in Malawi have not considered themselves to be researchers.

The school-based teacher research study of integrated literacy approaches in which Akusi and I collaborated had some advantages over the course-based approach. It was effective for several reasons. First, Akusi and I were active and in control of our own learning (Bork & Putman, 1986). We began by reflecting on our usual practices that were based in the behavioral models of teaching and then collaboratively worked on understanding and implementing integrated literacy approaches based on the constructivist's theories. Both of us were learners, although we held different positions in our education system: Akusi as primary school teacher and I as a primary school teacher trainer. Our work was in keeping with Bork and Putmam (1986) position that the process of learning is the same in all-learning situations, whether it is children in the schools or teachers in education programs; what the learner already knows, is the primary determining factor in how new knowledge will be acquired. We learned at our own pace because we were the researchers of our own work. We saw the patterns on how we were growing and developing, how events influenced and related to each other over the thirteen weeks of studying together (Arhar et al., 2001). For example, one pattern that I noticed was that as a teacher educator I was only able to help Akusi learn integrated literacy concepts that I had mastered myself first. If I failed to grasp a concept and tried to inconspicuously force it on Akusi, her behaviors in the classroom indicated that she also had not mastered it. We were able to see how knowledge, practice and development were related. For that reason we understood and gained personal ownership of the process of utilizing integrated literacy approaches in our own Malawian class. Clearly, we would not have gained the same level of knowledge and

ownership if we had listened to lectures about the goodness of integrated literacy approaches. If teachers embark on teacher research, every teacher can be involved and learn at their own pace.

Altering teachers' attitudes about participation in teacher research studies without financial gain is a possibility but it will require enormous changes. I believe that teachers may come to appreciate the need for personal professional growth if their initial teacher education curriculum promotes the importance of professional development and lifetime learning within the teacher preparation curriculum. Teachers should from teacher education infancy stage understand that initial teacher education is only the beginning of a professional life journey. In addition, balancing Malawi's approaches for professional development activities may help to remove the naive beliefs about continued teacher learning and financial benefits. Without dramatic changes, convincing primary school teachers that they can study without getting financial benefits but for the professional growth will remain a barrier to continued teacher learning.

*Providing time to practice integrated literacy approaches.* In this study, time could be considered a barrier to learning to implement integrated literacy approaches in schools from three perspectives. First, teachers may not be willing to spend time on activities such as learning to use integrated literacy approaches because of the stance they have towards professional growth. Secondly, the fixed timetables that guide teaching in the primary school do not allow for opportunities for professional growth of this kind. Third, the teaching overload that some teachers have may inhibit the teacher from spending time on learning new practices.

First, teachers in Malawi may not be willing to spend time to study the school-based integrated literacy approaches because of the opinion they have about continuing to learn. As already stipulated above, teachers naively believe that their involvement in professional growth activities should attract financial rewards. That means if there is no money, there will be no professional learning. This attitude towards learning is directly related to time because it is simple logic that working on teacher research studies without monetary attachments are not a priority with regard to teachers' needs; hence it is unlikely that they will commit their time to work on their studies of the integrated literacy approaches.

When Akusi and I practiced, the integrated literacy approaches we did not required a lot of extra time because the process of planning to teach, actual teaching and lesson reflecting were almost built into the normal teaching process. Two types of plans were made. Before schools

opened, Akusi organized and planned the English content that was to be covered for the whole term through the schemes of work. Then when schools opened, with the guidance of the timetable, she wrote lesson plans for every lesson. The integrated literacy approaches were almost built in this procedure because they adopted the content Akusi had planned to teach and followed the procedure of planning and reflecting for every lesson. The only difference was that during the study, the procedures of planning, lesson presentation and reflections were done in much detail than Akusi normally did, therefore require some extra time. The study purposely implemented the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches in place of the teacher-centered methods that characterized teaching and learning in schools in Malawi (Williams, 1993). Williams (1993) demonstrated learner-centered approaches produce more effective results than the teacher-centered**.** Akusi and I successfully made a shift from practicing traditional teacher-centered methods to learner-centered methods in the context of teaching students how to read and write in English. This change required constant practice through inquiry and reflective teaching. In reflective teaching, we monitored, evaluated and revised our teaching practices in a spiraling process continuously for thirteen weeks (Pollard, 2001). For example, in traditional approach the teacher prescribed what children should read and write while in the learner-centered approach, children were given opportunity to select what they wanted to read or write through guided activities. All these processes were occurring within the normal teaching process of planning, teaching and lesson reflection hence demanded a little extra time in addition to Akusi's normal working hours.

In addition, as Akusi and I engaged in teaching with integrated literacy approaches, we collaborated in our decisions and actions because we were co-researchers. To be co-researchers in this study meant that we had to develop a close one-to-one relationship. Although Akusi was a primary school teacher and I was a primary school teacher educator, I believed that we were in a complementary relationship because each had knowledge and experience that the other did not have. For example, I had the theoretical knowledge about integrated literacy approaches while Akusi had the current practical experiences with children in a classroom. Moreover, learning is believed to be a socially constructed process that cut across ages (Arhar et al., 2001). Akusi and I collaborated through discussions that lead to joint decisions and actions in the process of implementing the integrated literacy approaches. All these processes demanded a little bit more

time which teachers might not be willing to commit because of the opinions they have towards learning for professional growth.

When looking critically at Malawi's teachers working times as a civil servant, the time Akusi and I spent on practicing integrated literacy approaches fell within their jurisdiction-working period of 7.30 a.m to 5.00 p.m. by virtue of being civil servants. The working conditions for teachers, including time, are guided by Malawi Public Service Regulations (MPSR). The MPSR states that civil servants should work from 7.30 a.m to 5.00 p.m. Schools start operating earlier than 7.30 a.m. and teachers stop working at 3.30 irrespective of whatever class they are assigned. Nevertheless, working hours are defined by the number of contact hours teachers spend in a given class; hence, time for planning and reflection on lessons, including professional learning are left at teachers' own discretion. According to Elliot (1991), the organizational structure influences teachers to put a priority on pupils and content areas in the classroom. Primary teachers in Malawi view reflection on practice as an optional extra that can be carried out if and when other commitments allow. If teachers can learn to value their professional learning and include this integral part of teacher profession in their time commitment, they may be willing to participate in activities such as this dissertation study.

Secondly, the fixed timetables that are prescribed by the Malawi Ministry of Education for class procedures may inhibit the practice of integrated literacy approaches. The Ministry, through the head teachers and Primary School Advisors make sure that the timetable is followed. Following the timetable ensures that all subjects are covered and given their allotted time. Akusi and I extended the 35 minute period for English instruction to almost an hour because it wasn't possible to practice integrated literacy approaches in 35 minutes as indicated on the timetable. This was against the Ministry's policy because it affected the other subjects negatively. The timetable divides time into periods of 30 minutes and 35 minutes for standards one to five and six to eight respectively. This implies that each period is for the teaching and learning of a single subject with exception of some subjects such as Agriculture, Home Economics, and Science, which are given two periods in a row because they are considered to be practical subjects that require more time. A bell is rung at the end of each period to remind the teacher that the period is over and should change to another subject

Teaching with integrated literacy approaches required more time because each learner was engaged in reading and writing what they wanted under the guidance of Akusi. In addition,

reading and writing were the focus of integration in this study for the many reasons stipulated in the literature review. Hence, all lessons Akusi presented were designed to constitute English reading and writing activities. To accomplish these activities coupled with class organization in a class of 78 children, more time was needed. At first Akusi was not comfortable with the time adjustments, she felt the PEA would not approve of this arrangement, but with assurance that permission was granted in order to do the study, Akusi consented.

It was necessary to adjusting the timetable in order to implement integrated literacy approaches. The Ministry of Education would not approve of this in the normal teaching day for primary teachers because other subjects would automatically be affected. If large numbers of primary teachers were to study and implement integrated literacy approaches in the manner that Akusi and I did, it would be necessary to have the approval of the Ministry. Thus, another barrier to implementing integrated literacy approaches in Malawi primary schools is the time restrictions as prescribed by the Ministry.

The final reason that time constraints would be a barrier to studying and practicing integrated literacy approaches is in relation to large classes sizes. In Malawi schools, any enrollment above 60 children per class per teacher is considered a large class. At the beginning of the study, Akusi was teaching English to 167 children in each lesson. It was impossible to implement integrated literacy approaches with such enrolment because apart from other factors it was clear that Akusi's time was spent on class management problems rather than on the actual teaching of English. Large classes are prevalent in Malawi primary schools; on average, one teacher has 85 - 180 children (Kishindo et al., 2005). Management challenges were aggravated by teacher-centered traditional methods that were in practice. In the traditional Malawi approach to teaching, the children are passive, the teacher decides on their actions and she struggles to make sure that children are doing what she wants.

Akusi and I were able to create a learner-centered environment by reducing the number of children and motivated them to be actively involved in the classroom activities. Akusi's role changed to a facilitator and there were far fewer class management problems (because all of the children were busy with reading and writing activities). This allowed time for Akusi and I to think and reflect on the lesson while they were occurring. When the class is large, it is impossible for the teacher to reflective and adjusts while teaching because there are just too

many students needing attention. By the end of the day, teachers who work with 60 – 180 students at a time are too exhausted to even think of or develop interest in professional growth activities.

From many perspectives, time can be seen as a barrier to implementing integrated literacy approaches in Malawi. Although Akusi and I did not spend much time beyond the normal teaching day working on our planning and reflecting, teachers would need to be convinced that they could learn and implement a new approach within normal teaching hours. Further, teachers need to be able to work with smaller class sizes in order to implement teaching approaches that involve students actively in working collaboratively. This is possible in Malawi, but it requires a move away from departmentalized primary teaching such that primary teachers teach all subject area to smaller groups of children. Because there are not enough classrooms for non-departmentalized teaching, it requires that some teachers work with their student groups under the trees, and this nearly impossible during the rainy season. Further, our experience indicated that more time than 30 or 35 minutes is needed to successfully implement integrated literacy instruction in English. Unless the Ministry of Education makes time restrictions on content lesson more flexible, there is still little probability of success in implementing integrated literacy approaches in Malawi primary schools.

*Collaborating to support integrated literacy approaches.* The absence of collaborative inquiry between teachers in primary schools and between primary school teachers and teacher educators is a barrier to implement integrated literacy approaches in Malawi. Collaborative inquiry is another constructivists-based concept suggesting that group learning is superior to individual learning (Pollard, 2001). Inquiry leads into the unknown and that can be threatening. Akusi and I took the challenge to inquire and tread into the unknown forest of the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches. This was truly an unknown forest in Malawi. Williams (2002) found that in Malawi classrooms, the concept of "learner-centered" was paid lip service but in practice, it never existed. Akusi and I discovered learner-centered approaches of the integrated literacy approaches together, and collaborative inquiry was the major factor that contributed to this discovery. Collaborative inquiry allowed for the optimal use of knowledge that Akusi and I possessed. It provided the support we needed when faced with fears, insecurities and failure and the immediate feedback between the two of us made it possible to see how theory and practice were connected. Through collaborative inquiry, as I was attempting to help Akusi

understand and implement integrated literacy approaches, I was also teaching myself. This evidence suggested that integrated literacy approaches would be difficult for Malawian teachers to learn and implement in the absence of collaborative inquiry. Learning to implement integrated literacy approaches in a classroom through collaborative inquiry is like traveling in a forest in which each traveler has to find their own way but does not have a complete set of equipment for finding a path. The set of equipment is complete when one or more people travel together in order to share their equipment.

First, in implementing integrated literacy approaches, Akusi and I shared a complementary relationship where knowledge and experiences were concerned. Though we had a number of similarities, each had some knowledge and experiences that the other did not have. For example, I had theoretical knowledge about integrated literacy approaches and had experience with teacher education. Akusi had knowledge and up-to-date practical teaching experiences with children. One major similarity that Akusi and I had was that both our teaching beliefs and experiences were based in behaviorist's approaches. In these approaches, knowledge is transmitted by the teacher and received by the learner; it is always the teachers or senior persons in the hierarchy who gives the knowledge to the learner or junior because they naively believe that they own all the knowledge. The learner, on the other hand, assumes the position of receiving and following. The consequences are that the learner is simply a passive receiver of information. Akusi and I were in a hierarchical relationship, that is, by virtue of my being a teacher trainer and Akusi a primary school teacher, I was senior and her teacher and therefore "owned knowledge". However, with struggles, I worked hard at turning things upside down by changing the hierarchical relationship to a horizontal relationship of collaboration. I had to change the attitude that I owned knowledge and Akusi had to change her attitude that she was empty and had to be filled with knowledge. In collaborative inquiry, leadership and knowledge is not by position and does not belong to one person but rather depends upon expertise and the challenge at hand (Arhar et al., 2001). Akusi and I shared our experiences and knowledge as we explored the strange forest of the integrated literacy approaches through a continuous process of reflective teaching. Reflective teaching means learning in practice through questioning, examining, evaluating and criticizing one's practices (Labaree, 2000). If teachers do not collaborate, they are denying one another professional growth that can only be realized through collaboration.

Secondly, the support that Akusi and I gave each other helped us to survive the journey of constructing the way to integrated literacy approaches. There were times we faced challenges in form of fears, discouragements and insecurities and attitudes as I attempted to help Akusi understand and implement the integrated literacy approaches. These were overcome by the consolation that we were traveling together; therefore we both bore the responsibility of the outcomes whether failures or successes. For that reason, the impact of the challenges was reduced. If teachers do not collaborate, they are likely to have more difficult taking on risks that will help them learn and grow in their profession and they are more likely to be consumed by insecurity and fear of the unknown.

Thirdly, collaborative inquiry provided the immediate feedback that is absent in the transmission model of teaching where by theory is separated from practice. The provision of immediate feedback through collaborative inquiry revealed how theory and practice were connected. It revealed that introduction of theory does not automatically ensure smooth implementation or practice. For example, in this study, I initially and simultaneously introduced all the concepts of integrated literacy approaches that were understudy. These were reading, journal writing and the concept of learner-centeredness. Immediate feedback from Akusi showed that she did not grasp all the concepts at once. Akusi understood the concept of self-selected reading first, followed by writing and then learner-centeredness. Secondly, immediate feedback in the form of reflective conversation between Akusi and myself revealed that we were sometimes interpreting the concepts differently. This feedback provided opportunity to clarify for each other and settle our differences. For example, one of the differences that emerged was the meaning of "active student participation." Akusi's interpretation of pupil participation was the pupils' ability to answer aural questions she asked of the group. My interpretation was that in learner-centered integrated literacy approaches, pupil participation meant helping the learners to take control of their learning. When I explained my understanding of this concept to Akusi, and the way in which active pupil participation was expected to impact learning, we were able to settle on a common definition – in this case, mine. Lastly, immediate feedback revealed that some concepts required repeated practice before they were understood. For example, Akusi understood unstructured journal writing after repeated practice. If teachers do not collaborate, they may continue to accumulate knowledge, which they are unable to put into practice, and they will deny themselves of the power to understand why things happen they way they do.

Lastly, through collaborative inquiry I made a strange discovery as I attempted to help Akusi understand and implement integrated literacy approaches. I discovered that I was also schooling myself in understanding and implementing integrated literacy approaches. Just like Akusi, my previous beliefs were grounded in the behavioral transmission models of teaching. I had learned about learner-centered integrated literacy approaches to English language learning from reading books and articles and participating in my doctoral courses. However, helping Akusi to understand and implement learner-centered integrated literacy approaches meant that I had to understand them first before I could help Akusi understand them. As McAntyre et. al. (2000) argue that teachers cannot give what they don't have. Collaboration with Akusi gave me the opportunity to better understand the theory and practice of integrated literacy approaches at both teacher education and primary school levels. Like Akusi, learning the practicability of the integrated literacy approaches was not an event but rather a gradual development process. Through continuous collaborative reflections with Akusi, I learned how to help Akusi learn in the learner-centered way. Moreover, I observed that any concept I tried to introduce to Akusi, which I had not mastered myself, Akusi failed to practice in class and vice versa. Finally, considering that teaching is a complex process, I believe that collaboration can help teachers discover the unknown of their profession and understand it better. Next, it might be appropriate to briefly examine why there is no collaboration amongst teachers in Malawi.

The absence of collaboration might be attributed to the historical background of education in Malawi. Historically, just like other education systems in developing countries, Malawi adopted the traditional behavioral-base approaches that have dominated teaching and learning for quiet a long time. Malawi's education system has operated under the beauracratic hierarchical structures that execute control from high to low. These two characteristics of education in Malawi – the traditional approaches to teaching and the organizational structure, probably contribute to the lack of collaboration amongst teachers. For example, the traditional approaches assume the teacher to be the owner of knowledge and the learner to be the receiver of that knowledge. This applies to any learning level, whether the learners are children in primary schools or teachers in teacher education programs. Consequently, teachers are enclosed in their own classroom doing what ever they believe to be best (Michael & Breault, 2000). Even when teachers are sharing subjects in the same classroom, they don't collaborate on curriculum issues apart from giving each other turns to teach.

Further, the beauractratic organization structure in which schools are organized and managed holds the expectation that teachers will operate in restricted environments controlled by policies and procedures (Arhar et al., 2001). That is, teachers followed prescribed syllabuses and teacher's guides that contain prescribed lesson procedures and handbooks respectively. Hence, this setting coupled with the traditional approaches of teaching does not provoke collaboration. All stakeholders in the system expect to give or receive depending on what position they are holding. Consequently, if teachers wait to receive information, policies and procedures and follow them strictly rather than inquire about their practice in order to contribute to its growth and development, then they will not see the need for collaborative inquiry.

Malawi primary schools are well organized for collaborative inquiry. If, for example, all three teachers at Kapeni, collaborated in planning for, teaching, and reflecting upon all of the content area subjects, it would be possible for three teachers to bring their expertise together to teach all of the students in a class at once. Unfortunately in most schools, departmentalization is used; thus one teacher plans for and teaches a few of the content area subjects, and she alone works with all of the students at once while the other two teachers sit and wait for time for their next lesson. If the bureaucratic organizational structure in Malawi strongly supported collaborative teaching, perhaps teachers would embrace the opportunity to learn and grow as professionals.

*Materials for integrated literacy approaches.* Lack of teaching and learning materials, especially text and lack of teacher's skills to use the texts effectively, is a barrier to implementing the integrated literacy approaches in Malawi primary schools. Texts can be considered any printed matter especially the main body (Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus, 1996). Although there were many textual materials available that facilitated teaching and learning in the study with Akusi, and these text and writing materials were indispensable because the focus of integration was on reading and writing as vehicles for children to learn English as a foreign language. Akusi and I managed to assemble a few reading materials. These included the curriculum textbooks that already existed in the class, assorted short story books that we borrowed from Blantyre Teacher Training College library, and old Malawi newspapers that Akusi and I brought from our homes. In the absence of these texts, it would not have been possible to implement integrated literacy approaches.

Thus, the absence of reading materials, especially books and other text materials is a barrier to implementing integrated literacy approaches. Integrated literacy requires that children spend much time in the practice of reading and writing. Without texts and writing materials, teachers cannot provide practice to support children's English acquisition in the areas of reading and writing. As previously discussed, the focus of integration was on reading and writing as a means of assisting children in learning English as a second language. Many primary schools in Malawi do not have reading materials; they depend on the prescribed curriculum textbook, which is usually inadequate (Banda et al., 2001; Kishindo et al., 2005). At the initial stage of the study, Akusi's class had so few English curriculum books that one book was shared between two to four children. Children had to read aloud to allow those with no books to hear what was being read, and it is not likely that children who sat and listened to others reading were gaining reading skills themselves.

Integrated approaches to literacy acquisition require that children learn to read and write by being immersed in reading and writing so that the learners can develop reading and writing as naturally as language learning (Vogt et al., 2000). Akusi and I attempted to provide children with a variety of reading materials and guided learner-centered reading and writing activities. Children read as many books of their choice as possible and engaged in unstructured journal writing each day. Unstructured journal writing is a lows-stakes writing activity that motivates beginners to write in a foreign language without the pressure of creating polished finished products (Vogt et al., 2000). It is believed that the provision of a variety of reading materials that provide children with extensive reading in the second language, promotes growth of reading comprehension and overall second language proficiency (Cummins, 2003). Large collection of reading materials are not common in Malawi schools, and the lack of these materials is a clear barrier to the implementation of integrated literacy approaches.

The other barrier in implementing integrated literacy approaches is related to the teacher's inability to use text materials to facilitate reading and writing. There are probably situations whereby schools were provided with the supplementary reading materials but teachers do not use them due to lack of knowledge and skills. This was reflected in the study with Akusi. Nine months after the study ended, out of interest, I informally chatted with Akusi to find out whether or not there was any thing that we did together that she still cherished and used in her teaching. Akusi stated that she still treasured journal writing and use of supplementary readers.

106

When asked how she obtained the supplementary readers after we returned the ones we were using to the college library, Akusi said she had discovered that they had similar short story books in their own school that were lying dormant in the school's storeroom. She later learnt from other sources that these supplementary readers were distributed to all the urban schools sometime in the past. This was an indication that provision of books alone does not guarantee pupils will be permitted to utilize them to support learning to read and write in English. Teacher competency in using the books to facilitate pupils reading and writing development is also of paramount importance.

Without the study, Akusi would not have had the confidence to claim these books for use in her class. Moreover, after the books were discovered, the head teacher announced to all the teachers of standards three to seven that they could claim their supplementary readers that were lying dormant in the storeroom, but all declined the offer. It is reasonable to assume that the other teachers did not know how to use these texts to support English learning. Hence, the availability of text on its own is not adequate; it has to be accompanied by knowledge and skills in using them.

*School management support for integrated literacy approaches.* Education policy in Malawi allows research studies to be conducted in the Malawi primary schools; however, lack of school management's participation and interest can be a barrier in implementing integrated literacy approaches. School management's participation and interest can be in the form of awareness, support and encouragement. Firstly, school management has the responsibility of making both teacher educators and primary school teachers aware of and reinforcing the research study policy, as they do with the other policies that exist in the ministry. Of course primary school teachers and teacher educators are aware that research studies do happen in their schools and there is evidence that both teachers and teacher educators believe that research studies is done by external scholars from the university and other organizations that are interested in education (Arhar et al., 2001). It is obvious that teachers do not know that they can inquire about their practice through research studies. It is school management's responsibility to help teachers take interest in inquiring about their own practice by helping them to understand the importance and provide support in learning how to conduct research studies. Teachers could become willing to learn more about their practice through research studies if they understood and see the importance and benefits of such activities. For example, the major reason Akusi willingly

participated in this study was that she understood the benefits of research studies from her past experiences with research studies. She knew that her participation helped her "to own" what she had learned.

Secondly, to implement integrated literacy approaches will be difficult in the absence of school management involvement because schools are centrally controlled, thus control is executed from top to bottom. The teachers and students in the classroom are at the bottom; they practice only that which has been prescribed by the authorities in the organizational structure. Consequently, teachers prescribe the same in their classrooms. That is they teach from the government syllabus and are guided by lesson procedures as prescribed by teacher's guides, and they teach subjects by following timetables. When need arise for innovation in practice, information is passed from the authorities to the teachers through lectures in workshops (Stuart & Kunje, 2000).

The practice integrated literacy approaches requires changing from traditional approaches to teaching and learning to learner-centered approaches of integrated literacy approaches. To implement such changes is a long process that involves all levels of interested parties including teacher trainers, authorities in the school management hierarchy, and other teachers in schools. Akusi, a primary school teacher and I, a teacher educator demonstrated that change from the traditional perspective of teaching and learning to the constructivists based learner-centered teaching and learning are a possible. If school management authorities were given opportunity to experience the learner-centered approaches to teaching, they might be able to develop appreciation for learner-centered integrated literacy approaches. It would be particularly important for head teachers, Primary School Education advisors, and the teacher educators to have this kind of teacher research experience because these three categories of people have a direct interaction with teacher learning. It is only with a full understanding of the process that these stakeholders can facilitate integrated literacy approaches by providing favorable conditions for the successful implementation of integrated literacy approaches. Thus, there is need for school management to be involved in: (a) encouraging and motivating teachers to study the integrated literacy approaches, (b) facilitating collaboration between teachers and between teachers, teacher educators and Primary School Education Advisors, (c) helping teachers to get teaching and learning materials, especially text, and (d) allowing teachers' flexibility with the fixed structures of time and practices of the traditional approaches so that they are able to inquire

and learn for professional growth, in order to support the development of learner-centered integrated approaches to English literacy acquisition in Malawi. Without the involvement and support of school management, implementation of integrated literacy approaches will be impossible.

## Implications of the Study for Teacher Education

Learner-centered teaching is gaining acceptance in all levels of education including teacher programs in Malawi. There is a growing concern that teachers should change their approaches towards this concept (Ministry of Education, 1991). The study I conducted is not a panacea but may contribute towards improving the state of teacher education. I conducted a study whose purpose was to discover how a teacher learns to teach through reflection and inquiry in a Malawi context. This is an approach advocated by the new constructivism-based philosophies of learning. The study findings helped me as a teacher educator, to get a better understanding of how teachers learn to teach. I believe that the findings have implication for teacher education in Malawi and that teacher educators may change their conception of teacher education by creating learning experiences that will incorporate these findings. McIntyre and Byrd ( 2000) claim that teachers teach in the same way they experience learning themselves. This implies that if teachers learn through reflective practice, in collaboration and inquiry, they will practice the same at whatever level of teaching, whether in teacher education or in the primary school class.

First, I learnt that knowledge and skills of reflective practice helped both teacher-learner and teacher educator to learn new knowledge and the skill of reflection itself, and they are able to follow their growth and development in learning. This is possible because reflective practice provide immediate feedback. Teacher-learners should get feedback of both theory and practice. This implies that teacher education should be conducted in conjunction to the context of a real learning situation. When teacher-learners get immediate feedback, they are able to make appropriate actions, adjustments and decisions that help them to construct knowledge from what they already know to what they don't know. What the learner already knows determine how the new knowledge will be acquired (Labaree, 2000). Teachers like any other learners, bring with them to the learning situation beliefs, knowledge, skills and dispositions that they accumulate

109

over time. These dispositions are fixed, powerful and cannot be easily changed by simplified teacher education programs that just tell teachers what to do (Borko & Putman, 1986). It is only through reflection in practice that teachers are able to connect what they already know about teaching to what they don't know. As was the case with Akusi, she did not learn the whole chunk of ideas of integrated literacy approaches at once and did not learn all the concepts in the same way, but through constant feedback by reflection, as a teacher educator I was able to trace this pattern of learning. Therefore, supporting teachers to reflect upon their practices is of great importance because it helps them learn new knowledge and at the same time develop the skill of reflection.

Secondly, when teachers develop the skill and knowledge of reflection coupled with the skill of collaborative inquiry, teacher learning is effective. To collaborate means to work together and to inquire means to tread into the unknown forest. In this respect, the unknown forest is the teaching profession. If teachers of different or same levels collaborate and inquire about their profession, they share knowledge, inquire about their practice, examine how theories apply to their practice and support one another when tackling the numerous challenges and aspects that puzzle them in the teaching profession. Inquiry results in discovering or questioning new things. Trying new things is threatening; it is better-challenged and done in collaboration. Teachers recognize issues and make informed decisions when they inquire in collaboration with other teachers. Collaboration produces discussions, actions and provides the security that is associated with innovations. Teachers develop trust and become open with each other. "Activity and discussion gradually weave the values and self of individuals into the culture and mission of the school" (Pollard, 2001, p.19). The psychological walls that teachers build around themselves due to teaching in isolation and wearing masks of authority are broken and replaced by the benefits of working, talking, reflecting and having fun. Collaborative inquiry should be aligned with reflective practice because when collaboration becomes a culture it sometimes become oppressive and can even stifle innovation than encouraging teamwork. In such circumstances, reflective teachers are most likely to want things changed (Ibid, 2001).

Domasi College of Education has benefited from this study because, having gone through the processes of collaboration and inquiry and reflective practice my perception of teacher learning changed. I have involved my students in collaborative inquiry and reflective practices by creating activities that facilitate these skills. However, although this study has illuminated

these teacher-learning skills, there are many other ways teachers may learn and develop these skills. Finally, with the teacher-learning skills I have acquired, I will continue to learn and help my students do the same.

Thirdly, teachers should be willing to learn because learning to teach is a cumulative, developmental and lifelong pursuit that every teacher should engage in (Bransford et al., 2000). Teachers cannot depend on initial training to suffice for all their needs across a teaching career in this ever-changing world, and this is true for any profession (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). However, teachers should be supported and motivated in developing an understanding of why they should continue to learn. Assisting teachers to be motivated should begin in their initial education and continue when they go to schools to practice teaching, so that they appreciate that learning to teach is a lifelong process. Teachers should be aware of all teacher-learning opportunities that exist. For example, they should know that they could learn from their own practice, from formal and informal interactions with others, from teacher educators in colleges and universities, from research, from consultants, and their roles as parents (Bransford et al., 2000).

**Suggestions For Further Research**

The results of the study have motivated me to make the following recommendations. First, I suggest that a longitudinal follow-up study could be built on this research study in order to see whether Akusi has maintained or even extended integrated literacy approaches to understanding and implementing various types of writing and other forms of integration that enhance learning English as a foreign language. This study focused on unstructured writing and one form of integration, that is, reading and writing. Longitudinal studies could be carried out with Akusi as she learned and implemented structured writing approaches, subject integration approaches, and linking integrated literacy to the learner's cultural practices. In addition, the future studies could also examine the impact the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches have on children's learning English as a second language.

Secondly, I recommend that integrated literacy approaches be extended to the other teachers at Kapeni Demonstration School because according to Akusi's epilogue of her experiences, she found the approaches effective for teaching English. It does not mean that the

111

results of this research will be taken as a basis for changing the curriculum, but the results are likely to assist in maximizing the potential of English learning only if other teachers are also involved in this type of continuous professional development that Akusi and I conducted.

While I appreciate that teachers learn in different forms, I recommend that teacher educators should engage in continuous action research studies with students and practicing teachers at both pre-service teacher education and professional development activities respectively. Action research can provide small-scale research that may help teachers to clarify unclear concepts of teaching and improve teaching practice as it has done for Akusi and me. It may also help to critical test the education theories that formal academic researchers produce, before transferring wholesale ideas into classrooms. Action research is the only way teachers can get involved in researching on their practice (Arhar et al., 2001). For a long time, teachers have depended on external traditional academic research conducted by especially institutions of higher learning. However, with action research, the traditional academic research and the action research can be complementary, and the research process can serve as a transaction for sharing ideas across among researchers.

I also recommend that Akusi be supported in order for her to continue practicing the ideas she has acquired about integrated literacy approaches. The little knowledge she has gained about integrated literacy approaches, cannot sustain her. A degree course in English Education instruction may help to increase and reinforce her knowledge about language learning and how to conduct an action research.

## Summary

This action research study demonstrated a teacher educator's inquiry to better understand how teachers learn new knowledge and approaches of teaching English as a second language. The study attempted to discover how teachers learn, by attempting to answer the question, "How does a teacher acting as a co-researcher came to understand integrated literacy approaches in an English class in Malawi". The results provided knowledge of integrated literacy approaches and evidence of the key elements of teacher learning processes. These key elements were collaboration, inquiry, and reflection. The process of interacting with the primary school teacher helped the teacher educator to also develop the skills of those same key teacher-learning

112

elements, which can be employed in teacher education programs for both initial and professional development programs. Knowledge and skills of these key elements of teacher learning may assist teacher educators to provide learning experiences that will assist teacher-learners to learn through collaboration, inquiry and reflection.

This study illuminated the need for teacher educators to develop interest to continually inquire about their practice as one way of guiding teaching and learning in both teacher education and primary schools, and that one way of doing this inquiry is to go beyond the teacher education classroom to the primary school classroom to discover how a teachers learn to that end. There was also evidence that an interdependence relationship developed between the teacher educator and the primary school teacher. In essence, the teacher educator represented theory and the primary school teacher represented practice. Since, combining theory and practice is of great importance in teacher education, teacher-learners should be assisted by teacher educators to reflect on both theory and practice of teaching, based on the understanding that these two components are inseparable. In addition, the study demonstrated that the learner-centered integrated literacy approaches of the constructivism-based philosophy, which are also included in the Malawi curriculum but implementation is still a challenge in the primary classes, are possible.

Finally, the study experience has illuminated the need for me to explore new areas of growth in literacy. As I reflected on my experiences in this study, I saw a major shift of my concept about teacher education. I have developed skills of collaboration, inquiry, and reflection that have motivated me to see more areas of growth in English literacy development. I want to continue growing as an inquirer and as a reflective and collaborative learner with classroom teachers by exploring more about literacy in relation to learning English as a second language, specially literacy across the curriculum, advanced literacy, structured writing, and literacy assessment.

# REFERENCES

Arhar, J.M., Holly, M.L., & Kasten, W.C. (2001). *Action research for teachers*; traveling the yellow brick road. Columbus, OH: Merrill, Prentice Hall.

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Razavieh, A. (2002). *Introduction to research in education* (6th ed.). San Francisco: Wadsworth.

Ball, D. L., & Cohen, D. K. (1999). Developing practice, developing practitioners: Towards a practice-based theory of professional education. In L. Darling-Hammond & Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 3-32). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Banda, T., Mchikoma, C., Chimombo, J., & Milner, G. (2001). The Quality of Education: Some Policy Suggestions based on a Survey of Schools (SACMEQ) policy Research: Report No. 7 (Malawi).

Borko, H., & Putman, R. (1986). Learning to teach. In D.C. Berliner & R.C. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of education psychology* (pp.673-708), New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillam.

Bray, S. J., Kramer, P. A., & LePage, D. (2000). The expert teacher. In B. E. Steffy, M. P. Wolfe, S.H. Pasch, and B.J. Enz (Eds.), *Life cycle of the career teacher* (p.75). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L. & Cockings  (Eds), (2000) *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school.* Washington, D.C: National Academy Press.

Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Carrasquillo, A., & Hedley, C. (1993). (Eds.), *Whole language and the bilingual learner*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Company.

Cooper, J. D. (1993). *Literacy*; helping children construct meaning. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Conteh-Morgan, M. (2002). Connecting the dots: Limited English proficiency, second language learning theories, and information literacy instruction. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 28(4), 191-196.

Crawford, A.N. (2003). Communicative approaches to second-language acquisition: The bridge to second language literacy. In G. Garcia (Ed.), *English learners*: *Reaching the highest level of English literacy* (pp. 152-181). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Cummins, J. (2003). Reading and the bilingual student: Fact and friction. In G. Garcia (Ed). *English Learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy*. (pp. 2-7). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

DiPardo, A. (2003). Teacher professionalism and the rise of "multiple literacies": How to describe our specialized knowledge. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, R.J. Squire & J.M. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (2nd Ed) (pp. 143-150). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Elliot, J. (1991). *Action research for educational change*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Farrant, J. S. (1991). *Principles and practice of education (2nd Ed).* Singapore: Longman.
.
Farris, P. J. (2001). *Language arts: Process, product and assessment (3rd Ed).* Boston: McGraw Hill.

Fullan, M.G. (1982). *The meaning of educational change*. London: Cassel Education Ltd.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Goodman, K. S. (1992). I didn't found whole language. *The Reading Teacher, 46,* 188-199.

Griffin, A. G. (1999). *The education of teachers*. Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education.

Gunter, M. A., Estes, T. H., & Schwab, J. (2003). *Instruction*: *A models approach (4th Ed).* Boston: Pearson Education.

Hadley, A.O. (2001). *Teaching language in context*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. G. (1992). *Understanding teacher development*. London: Cassell.

Heller, M. F. (1995). *Reading-writing connections*; From theory to practice. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Hootstein, W. E. (1994). Enhancing student motivation: make learning interesting and relevant. *Education, 114(3),* 475-480.

Hung D. & Nichani M.R. (2002). Bringing communities of practice into schools: Implications for instructional technologies from Vygotskian perspectives. *International Journal of Instructional Media, 29(2), 171- 183.*

Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1988). *Student achievement through staff development.* London: Longman Group Ltd.

Kayambazinthu (1998). The language-planning situation in Malawi. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 19(5&6), 369-433.

Kishindo, E., Susuwere, W., Ndalama, L. J., & Mwale, L. (2005). Pupils' achievement levels in Malawi primary: A case study of twelve districts. Draft Report.

Krashen, L. (2003). Three roles of reading: Making a difference in reading. International Reading Association, 48th Annual Convention, Orlando, Florida. Unpublished Paper.

Krashen, S. (2000). Defending whole language; the limits of phonics instruction and the efficacy of whole language instruction. *Reading Improvement*, *39,* p.32-42.

Labaree, D.F. (2000). On the nature of teaching and teacher education: Difficult practice that look easy. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 228-233.

Malawi Institute of Education. (1998). Education for the child bulletin. Unpublished.

McGee, L.M., & Richgels, D.J. (2000). *Literacy beginnings*. Supporting young readers and writers. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

McIntyre, D.J., & Byrd, D.M.(Eds.) (2000). *Research on effective models for teacher education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

McLaughlin, M. & Vogt, M. (Eds.), (2000*). Creativity and innovation in content area teaching*. Norwood, CT: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Menyuk, P. (2003). Linguistics and teaching the language arts. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, R.J. Squire & J.M. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (2nd Ed) (pp. 113-120). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Merriam, S. B. (2001*). Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Michael, J. B., & Breault, R.A. (2000). The novice teacher. In E. Steffy (Eds.), *Life cycle of the career teacher* (pp. 26-40). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press,

Ministry of Education, Sports & Culture. (2000). Policy & Investment Frame work (PIF). Unpublished Education Sector policy document.

Ministry of Education and culture. (1991). *Malawi primary school syllabus; English*. Domasi, Malawi: Malawi Institute of Education.

Ministry of Education and UNICEF. (1998). Free primary education; The Malawi experience 1994-98: A policy analysis study. Unpublished.

Mtunda, F. G., & Safuli, D.D. (1997). *An introduction to theory and practice of teaching*. Blantyre, Malawi: Dzuka Publishing Company.

Newman, J. M. (Ed) (1985). *Whole language theory in use*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Ohanian, S. (2001). *Caught in the middle*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Oldroyd, D., & Hall, V. (1991). *Managing staff development*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Ormrod, J. E. (1999). *Human learning*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Patterson, L., Stansell, J. C., & Lee, S. (1990*). Teacher researcher from promise to power*. New York: Kantonah.

Pollard, A. (2001). *Reflective teaching in the primary school*. New York: Continuum.

Sagor, R. (1992). *How to conduct collaborative research.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Save the Children (US). (2000). *Teacher training, Resource Handbook*. Malawi: Save the Children Federation, Inc.

Shannon, P. (1990). Commentary: Teacher as researchers. In M. Olson (Eds) *Opening the door to classroom research* (pp141-154). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Smith, F. (1998). *The book of learning and forgetting*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Steffy, E.B., Michael, P., Wolfe, S.H., & Enz, B.J. (Eds.) (2000)*. Life circle of the career teacher*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Stuart, J. S., & Kunje D. (2000). The Malawi integrated in-service teacher education Project: An analysis of the curriculum and its delivery in the colleges MUSTER discussion Paper No 11, Centre for International Education, University of Sussex. P21.

Stuart, J. S. (2002). College tutors: A fulcrum for change? *International Journal of Educational Development, 22,* 367-379.

Shrum, J.L., & Glisan, E. W. (2000). *Teachers handbook*: *Contextualized language Instruction*. Boston: Thomson Heinle.

Thomas, J. A., Cooper, S. B., & Ponticell, J. A. (2000). Doing math the science way: Staff development for integrated teaching and learning. In McIntyre, D. J., & Byrd, D. M.(Eds.), *Research on effective models for teacher education* (pp 10-25). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

UNICEF. (1993). Situation analysis of poverty in Malawi. Unpublished.

Vacca, J. L., Vacca, R. T., & Gove, M. K. (2000). *Reading and learning to read* (4th Ed). New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Vacca, T. V. (2000). Taking the mystery out of content area literacy. In M. McLaughlin & M. Vogt (Eds.), *Creativity and innovation in content area teaching* (pp. 13-27). Norwood, CT: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1995, Fall). Retrieved June 16th, 2003, from http://ericps.ed.uiuc.edu/naecs/opi-nl/volume2/number4.html

Williams, E. (1993). First and second language reading proficiency of year 3, 4 and 6 children in Malawi and Zambia. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 10(1),* 915-929.

Williams, E. (2002). Investigating bilingual literacy: Evidence from Malawi and Zambia. *Book reviews / International Journal of Education Development, 22,* 689-703.

Williams, M., & Bolam, R. (1993). *The continuing professional development of teachers*. England and Wales: University College of Swansea.

Young, C. (2002). First language first: Literacy education for the future in a multilingual Philipine society. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 5(4),* pp.221-232.

## Appendix A

**Selection Interview questions**

1. May I know your name please?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your teaching qualification?
4. How long have you been teaching in primary school?
5. What class do you teach, and for how long?
6. What subjects do you teach?
7. How long have you taught English
8. How many languages do you speak?
9. Have you ever done or participated in a research study?
10. Do you think research is important?
11. Do you think research is for a certain caliber of people?
12. Can primary school teachers do research?
13. Given a chance would you participate in a research for the sake of knowledge?

## Appendix B

**The Co-researcher Selection Criteria**

1. Male or female primary school teacher, teaching in one of these classes; 5,6 or 7. These classes were selected based on three assumptions: First, at these levels, English was used as a medium of instruction and the children were considered linguistically mature in their native language Chichewa. Maturity in a native language was believed could allow students the ability to transfer universal language, strategies and knowledge from the first language to the new language (Carrasquillo, 1993). It was also assumed that standard 5,6 and 7 children were able to read and write in their native language hence could transfer the same skills to English language.

2. A T2 grade teacher. A T2 grade teacher was one who obtained a Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) after four years of secondary education and successfully completed one or two year initial teacher education. From my own experience, such teachers demonstrated quite a substantial level of English language proficiency; hence were expected to be better able understand the concepts under study and therefore making a suitable candidate for a co-researcher

3. The teacher should on minimum have taught for five years in primary school. It was assumed that such teachers would have acquired some expertise in teaching. Bray, et al (2000) described expert teachers as those who reached the expert level in the life cycle of the career teacher model. They had acquired wide experiences, had reached what was considered highest standards of teaching and often viewed themselves as members of a profession whose boundaries extended beyond the schoolhouse (Bray et al, 2000). Such a teacher was expected to contribute substantively to the study.

4. The teacher who was willing to learn new things and committed in participating up to the end of the study.

5. A teacher who was willing to sacrifice her/his time to work extra hours.

6. An easy to interact with person, who was flexible and had some sense of humor.

**Appendix C**

**Time line for study**

| Date | Action taken | Remarks |
|---|---|---|
| October 2003 | Asked the District Education Manager for permission to use a school in the district for the study. | Permission granted |
| October 2003 | Seek advice from Primary School Advisor to recommend five teachers as a base for Co-researcher selection. | Five teachers recommended |
| November 2003 | Interview the teachers for selection of participant. | Selection not successful |
| November 2003 | Alternative search for co-researcher. | Succeeded |
| December 2003 | Initiated collaboration with the co-researcher and discussed the schemes of work. | Completed |
| January 2004 | First interview and made informal observations for first impression. | Completed |
| January 2004 – March 2004 | Data collection and analysis through class observation, audio taped lesson reflections and lesson planning | Done |
| April 2004 | Post-interview of the co-researcher for the final impression. | Done |
| April 2004 – August 2004 | Final data analysis | |
| August 2004 – December 2004 | Started writing draft report | |

**Appendix D**

**Collaboration interview questions**

1. Tell me something about yourself and your family.
2. What are your hobbies?
3. When did you start teaching?
4. Why did you choose teaching career?
5. What are your ambitions in the teaching career?
6. What subjects are easier to teach and which ones are difficult?
7. How many languages do you speak?
8. Which language do you feel most comfortable with and which one is the least comfortable to speak?
9. How important are those languages to you?
10. How did you learn the languages?
11. How do you rate children's English language proficiency in your class?
12. In what ways do you think children can improve English proficiency?
13. Do you commit yourself to give children extra help to assist them improve their English? If yes / no, Why?

**Collaboration initiating activities introduced in the first and second week, slotted and conducted during lesson planning and reflection time.**

| Day 1 | ▪ Writing personal introductions in journals. Then exchanging the personal details and introducing each other from the journals. |
|---|---|
| Day 2 | ▪ Writing how we became literate in the journal.<br>▪ Reading children's books and sharing anything one is interested to share |
| Day 3 | ▪ . Sharing our early literacy experiences. |
| Day 4 | ▪ Writing how we became teachers |
| Day 5 | ▪ Sharing how we became teachers. Free writing in the journal notebooks. |
| Day 6 | ▪ Sharing how we learned the languages, we speak. What are our observations on language learning in real life situations? Any other business. |

## Appendix F

**First Interview questions**

1. Tell me, what are your experiences in teaching English as a second language?
2. What do you teach in writing lessons?
3. What do you teach in reading lessons?
4. Do you think there is any relationship between reading and writing?
5. For what purposes do children in your class read and write?
6. Is their any connection between English language and the other subjects you teach?
7. What readings and writings have you done for the past three months?
8. In your view, how do people learn a language?
9. How did you learn Chichewa / English
10. Do your students know why they learn English?
11. In what ways do your students use English beyond the classroom?
12. Do you think children can learn English on their own without the teachers' assistance? Why and why not?
13. How do you assess reading and writing in the classroom?
14. How do you teach grammar?
15. In addition to the text, what other type of books/reading materials do children read?
16. Tell me, what have been your experiences in teaching English as a second language?

**Post- Study interview questions**

1. What have you learnt about teaching to read and write?
2. Do you think there is any relationship between reading and writing?
3. What readings and writings have you done for the past three months?
4. In your view, how do people learn a language?
5. Do your students know how they learn English?
6. In what ways did your students use English beyond the classroom?
7. Do you think a child can learn English on his or her own without the teacher's assistance?
8. How do you assess reading and writing in the classroom?
9. How do you Asses student engagement?

10. For what purposes did children learn to read and write in your class?

11. How did you monitor and assess progress?

12. How do you think a person can learn English?

13. What other readings did the children do apart from the textbook?

14. What was the most difficult thing for you in implementing integrated approaches?

15. What did you do best in implementing integrated literacy approaches to teaching English?

**Appendix G**

**Observation Instruments**

| Planning | Plan the lesson collaboratively and conduct a pre-observation conference. Co-researcher wrote the lesson plan with clear lesson objectives. Stated how students will be involved |
|---|---|
| Implementation | Various observation techniques were used depending on the objective for that particular day. Some of the techniques were:<br><br>▪ Running a transcript; thus recording the lesson in a rough narrative form/ recording actual words spoken by the teacher to determine communication and type of interaction taking place.<br><br>Recording comments under specific topic areas between teacher/student actions, for example I could be observing how the teacher is engaging the students.<br><br><table><tr><td>Teacher</td><td>Students</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table> |
| Reflections | Conduct a post- observation conference with the teacher using the non- accusatory questions or observations. discuss the elements that were under observation, strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. For example, teacher's feelings about the design and content of the lesson. Areas that the teacher felt comfortable implementing and facilitating integrated instruction. Plan together the next lesson building upon the outcomes of the reflections. |

**Other observation guidelines**

1. Use motivational skills to introduce lessons and engage students interest through out the lesson.

2. What does the teacher integrate in lesson presentations?

3. How are students kept active all the time in the lessons? – Conducting conversations, providing and obtaining information, reading and writing, physical movement etc.

4. Does the teacher acknowledge children's efforts to learn English?

5. Is it a secure environment created for students?

6. What does the teacher do to extend the learning of English beyond the classroom?

7. Monitoring children's progress and providing feedback.

8. Seating plan that is conducive to student interaction.

9. A teacher is a facilitator and co-learner

10. Encourage input and challenge student ideas.

11. Gives clear directions.

12. Is non-judgmental of students' opinion.

13. Use varied strategies appropriate to the lessons.

14. Guide students during their independent work.

15. Giving students opportunities to plan and lead activities.

16. Read aloud to the class.

17. Uses assessment for diagnostic purposes other than establishing grades.

18. Allows student freedom to read and write what they want.

# Curriculum Vitae

**Personal Details:**

**Name**:          Edith Mmela
**Age:**          49 years
**Sex**:          Female
**Marital Status:**      married with four Children
**Nationality:**          Malawi

**Place of Work:**      Domasi College of Education,
                     P. O. Box 49
                     Domasi.

**Educational and professional Qualifications:**

**1997**:  Master of Education Degree in Educational Management, Administration and Policy.
      Obtained from the University of Bristol. United Kingdom. Subjects Included:
      - Introduction To Development Perspectives.
      - Education and Development.
      - Management and Administration in Primary Schools.
      - The Management of Staff Developmen.
      - Perspective on School Management.
      - Interpersonal Relations in Organization
      - The management of Language Teaching.

      - ***Dissertation****: "Continuing Teacher Education for The professional Development of Primary School Teachers in Malawi".*
      - **(Audited)***: Introduction to Educational Planning and*
      - *Educational Planning in Developing Countries.*

**1988**:  Diploma in Education:. Obtained from the University of Malawi (Chancellor College).
      Subjects studied: *Chichewa / Linguistics and Education Foundations*
**1977**:  Primary Teaching Certificate (T2 Grade) Obtained from Blantyre Teacher Training
      College.
**1975**:  Malawi School Certificate of Education obtained from Mulanje Secondary School.

**Other Certificates**:

   1983: Early Child Nutrition Certificate, obtained from The
         International Nutrition Center in Rome, Italy.
   1990: Early Childhood Education Certificate obtained, from The
         Golda Meir International Training Center in Haifa, Israel.
   2000: Mzake ndi Mzake: Peer group Education Program in HIV/AIDS
         Prevention.

- Currently attending a three-year course (2004- 2006) on Learner-Centered Education in Primary Literacy and Language Education with Invent (GTZ) Programme.

**Work experience:**

- Presently a Teacher Educator for Batchelor of Education in the Language Department at Domasi School of education.

- 1988 – 2001: Lecturer in Education Foundations and Chichewa at Lilongwe and Blantyre Teacher Training Colleges respectively.

- 2001: Acted as a Head of Department and as a Principal of Blantyre Teacher Training College.

- 2000- 2001:Participated in the Malawi School Support System professional development program as a facilitator in the National Core Training Team. Supported Primary Education Advisors (PEA) and head teachers.

- 1982 – 1985: Primary school teacher supervisor between 1982 and 1985 in Chikwawa and Thyolo districts.

- 1977 – 1981: Elementary teacher at Luchenza Full Primary School.

**Aspirations**:   To continue contributing to the development of teacher education at all levels of education system in Malawi (Primary, Secondary and University).

 **Hobbies:**   Listening to music, both religious and secular; sewing, cooking, and reading.