

## ***Give courage to the ladies: expansive apprenticeship for women in rural Malawi***

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### **Abstract**

Apprenticeship in developed and industrialised nations is increasingly understood as a theory of learning which connects workplace activity and formal study. The concept of ‘expansive apprenticeship’ defines frameworks for workforce development where participants acquire knowledge and skills which will help them in the future as well as in their current roles; ‘restrictive’ apprenticeships limit opportunities for wider, lifelong learning. In developing world economies apprenticeships are a traditional route to learning and employment, but tend to reflect a restrictive approach characterized by narrowly defined roles and weak educational outcomes.

This paper examines the apprenticeship opportunities in a large scale ‘Scholarship’ project in Malawi. The study materials and support structures are designed to move participants from restrictive to expansive contexts for learning and to develop hybrid roles as students, community workers and apprentice pedagogues. The authors examine data from the first cohort of participants and consider the extent to which the Scholarship offers an innovative model of expansive apprenticeship to address barriers to female continuing education and chronic teacher shortages in Sub Saharan Africa.

### **Introduction: Access to teaching in Malawi**

In 2011-2012 the first cohort of one thousand women in Malawi (in two waves of 500) undertook a year-long apprenticeship of combined academic distance study to pass school leaving examinations and mentored work experience as classroom helpers in overcrowded rural primary schools. The Access to Teaching Scholarship is a collaborative programme of the UK Open University's Teacher Education in Sub Saharan Africa (TESSA), the Forum of African Women Educationalists in Malawi (FAWEMA) and the Scottish Government; it is an outcome of the 2005 co-operation agreement between Scotland and Malawi to promote civic governance, sustainable economic development, health and education<sup>1</sup>. The rationale and design of the Scholarship draw upon Fuller and Unwin's (2011: 261) definition of apprenticeship as a resilient model of learning which can evolve and adapt to different contexts and demands and 'stretch' in different ways to respond to political and economic challenges:

*...this means that [apprenticeship] has global cachet – go to most places in the world and people will understand the meaning of this model of learning.*

The Access to Teaching Scholarship aims to address four chronic and inter related challenges in Malawi:

1. high teacher-pupil ratios especially in rural schools;
2. educational opportunities for girls;
3. access to education and training for women;
4. low numbers of female teachers.

Malawi is not on track to achieve the Millenium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015 (UNESCO 2010). A major factor hindering progress is a shortage of trained primary teachers, particularly in rural areas where 80% of the population resides and where the average primary pupil: teacher ratio can be as high as 135 to 1 (Malawi Government, 2009). In Malawi, as in other parts of Africa, girls drop out of school for a number of reasons including harassment and abuse (in school or travelling to and from school), pregnancy and early marriage, home responsibilities, parents' poor health or death,

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/International/Africa/Malawi>

family and societal expectations which favour the education of boys over girls, and lack of money for secondary school fees and materials. Without passing secondary school examinations, girls' opportunities for further education and employment are extremely limited. Female teachers are recognised as a factor in encouraging girls to stay in school and perform well (UNGEI, 2008) but in Malawi teaching is a male dominated profession. It is common for schools to have no female teachers and for girls never to experience a woman teacher as a role model; gender discrimination, harassment and the exclusion of girls can go unchallenged in these kinds of learning environments (UNESCO 2010a; UNGEI 2008, 2010). In this context, one thousand women – known as Scholars once they are accepted onto the apprenticeship programme - are recruited annually to work as primary school classroom helpers and to study for school leaving examinations they had previously failed or never taken. The aim is for Scholars to gain practical experience of working in a primary school as they attain academic qualifications to apply for teacher training college.

We will provide a brief overview of the first Scholarship cohort and its dual academic-vocational components and participants (for a detailed account see Wolfenden et. al. 2011). We will explore data from the first year to consider the extent to which the programme can be seen as a model of expansive apprenticeship (Fuller and Unwin 2010). The data referred to are drawn from the following written and oral sources:

- Scholars' successful applications (n 500)
- Informal interviews with Scholars (n 10)
- Informal observations of Scholars (n 15)
- Scholar review questionnaires (n 445)
- School Teacher Mentor feedback questionnaires (n 68)
- Informal interviews with School Teacher Mentors (n 12)
- Academic Tutor feedback questionnaires (n 47)

As a development project, data analysis has aimed to assess the long term sustainability of the Scholarship as a pathway to teacher training and the short term impact of additional adults in overcrowded classrooms. The data also illustrates some of the challenges of large scale

apprenticeship which endeavours improve educational and employment opportunities for the world's poorest.

### **Apprenticeship opportunities and needs**

Apprenticeships in Africa are the most important source of skills training (Haan 2006; Filipiak 2007) and contribute to a wide range of skills and knowledge development in, for instance: weaving, dress making, tailoring, hair styling, carpentry, auto mechanics, metal working, painting and carving. Liimatainen (2002:12) has estimated that up to 70 percent of urban workers in Africa have been trained through an apprenticeship system; apprenticeships in this context usually involve private arrangements between parents or apprentices and a skilled person who agrees to provide practical training in the workplace which can range from several months to three or four years in duration. The skilled person may certify an apprentice's training in return for a fee or for reduced earnings while learning on the job. These kinds of apprenticeships tend to suffer from a weak educational approach: few apprentices pass beyond a lower secondary education and many do not complete primary education (Johanson and Adams 2004).

Apprenticeships in developing nations tend to be in the informal economy, and in Sub Saharan Africa over 90% of work takes place in the informal economy— although there are state regulated apprenticeships in urban formal economies which focus on technical trades such as engineering and are mainly for young men (Nubler 2006, 2007; Salazar-Xirinachs 2007:13). Haan (2006:13) reports that apprenticeships are less evident in Southern Africa than in West and Central Africa, but in countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe he found large numbers of young people – mainly boys and men - acquiring skills in the informal economy under the guidance of a skilled master. Apprenticeships in Africa are more evident in urban areas than in rural areas, and numbers of learners entering apprenticeships has been rising for young men and women - with a higher growth rate for young women (Adams 2008): in South Africa, for instance, a 'learnership scheme' (a structured system of unit standards to attain nationally recognized qualifications) aims to broaden apprenticeships beyond traditional trades and crafts to include white collar occupations in the service sector (Ziderman and Van Adams 2000).

The Access to Teaching Scholarship in Malawi extends these models of apprenticeship by providing mature women in isolated rural areas an opportunity to return to education and gain work experience. The first cohort was recruited in four rural districts<sup>2</sup> identified by the Malawi government where teacher-pupil ratios are high and there are severe teacher shortages. Over two thousand women applied for the first 500 Scholarship places – demonstrating the need for employment, the demand for education and the widespread recognition of an unusual opportunity for supported work and study.

The Scholarship was open to women who had achieved one school leaving examination pass in English within the past five years; in written applications and interviews participants had to demonstrate sufficient English literacy skills to study<sup>3</sup> as well as capacity and motivation to work. Few of the Scholars had any employment within the regular waged sector, with the majority being engaged in farm work and / or domestic work. The majority are between 20 and 30 years old, married and have children. It is common for participants to have lost one or both parents to illness or HIV/AIDS, and some are caring for orphans. Their hardships have been compounded by not succeeding in school for the variety of reasons outlined earlier:

*Parents they encourage you to get married instead of [go to] school. ( C072)*

*My parents believe that a boy have a right to go to school not a girls. (C057)*

*My father died in 1991 and we [were] raised in a difficult life because my mother drop[ped] out from school in Standard 2, so had no chance to get employed. (C052)*

There are few studies of the factors which influence choice of teaching as a career in developing world economies. Previous studies in Malawi of primary and secondary school trainee teachers indicate that for many teaching is a profession of last resort (Mtika & Gates, 2011; Kadzamira 2006; Coultas & Lewin 2002). But Scholars in their application forms

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<sup>2</sup> Dedza, Mwanza, Chikhwawa and Nchitsi

<sup>3</sup> In Malawi, as in many African nations, English is the language of academic texts and post primary school education.

express a variety of motives for becoming a teacher, and a frequently cited reason is to rectify what is missing in school culture:

*Mother love.* (Mwanza applicant 065)

*Mercy for orphans.* (Mwanza applicant 136)

*Girls cannot be advised by men teachers.* (Chikhwawa applicant 055).

*Because a system of women abuse can be slow[ed] down in the schools.* (Chikhwawa applicant 108)

*A good teacher should not be fearful to learners. d.* (Chikhwawa applicant 15)

Motives to study and work focus unsurprisingly on meeting personal economic and material needs, a wish to be financially independent and to be able to support dependents through earning. But applicants also express a desire to contribute to local communities and the nation by supporting children's learning and reducing the pupil-teacher ratio, and to be a role model for girls.

*I think it's better to work so that I should assist my family, my relatives.* (Chikhwawa Scholar 15)

*So it is my ambition to help the villagers and village head men to help all the children who don't like to go to school..... we want to empower all the children surrounding us.* (Mwanza Scholar 25)

*Assist girls to work hard at school in order to go to university, not only boys.* (Mwanza Scholar 133)

*[To encourage girls to] Work hard at school versus early marriage.* (Chikhwawa Scholar 31)

*Girls will participate when they have a woman teacher...a woman teacher can give courage to the ladies. (Mwanza Scholar 138)*

The application data would suggest that apprenticeships for these kinds of learners must take account of a range of motivations, intrinsic and extrinsic, to work and study. The emphases Scholars place on their personal needs as adult learners and earners, their desire to change classroom culture, and their vision for the education of children indicate the appropriateness of an apprenticeship model which does more than transmit limited skills to suit a fixed workplace context. In addition, it would seem that apprenticeship for these kinds of learners needs to offer flexible outcomes for work and study, so that participants can use their vocational and academic experiences for different purposes.

### **Apprenticeship components: para professional learning**

The Scholarship programme provides work experience and formal study, both directed by distance learning materials and supported by experienced practitioners. The programme was designed to enable learning as active participation in a workplace context and as acquisition of formal knowledge, and explicitly includes Engeström's key 'ingredients' for effective learning:

- access to theoretical and experiential knowledge;
- authentic tasks and interactions with others;
- the application of concepts and theories in practice;
- guidance and teaching from others.

(Engestrom 1994: 48)

Participants work 4 mornings per week as classroom helpers in rural primary schools and dedicate 1 day per week to revise for school leaving examinations. The programme funds each Scholar with a bursary and highly structured distance study materials<sup>4</sup> for work and for study, and Scholars are monitored and mentored by experienced practitioners (see Table 1).

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<sup>4</sup> The School Experience Handbook and Examination Revision Guides are Open Educational Resources on the TESSA website: <http://www.tessafrica.net/> The materials draw on best practice in distance learning

<b>Work experience</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Vocational support</b>	<b>Opportunities for writing and reflection</b>
Placement in a local primary school 4 days per week to help children and teachers	School Experience Handbook: case study readings on child development and pedagogy, and directed practical activities to observe and support teaching and learning in the primary school, make classroom resources e.g. posters, number books	Personal guidance from an experienced primary school teacher mentor; regular meetings to plan, discuss and verify completion of School Experience activities  Encouragement and recognition from school head teacher and district education officer  Paired in the school with at least one other Scholar for peer support and safety	Structured writing tasks in School Experience Handbook: observing, planning and evaluating work with children and teachers; reflecting on experiences and progress  Directed discussion tasks with Mentor and with fellow Scholars
<b>Academic study</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Study support</b>	<b>Opportunities for writing and reflection</b>
1 study day per week at local Teacher Development Centre to revise for school leaving examinations in Mathematics, English and Sciences	Revision Guides for English, mathematics and sciences; weekly structured subject revision and practical activities to consolidate subject knowledge and develop English literacy	Regular group tutorials and study circles of 20 Scholars led by a secondary school teacher tutor to guide revision and examination preparation	Structured writing tasks in Revision Guides: using key concepts and vocabulary in practical contexts; sample exam questions  Directed discussion tasks with Tutor and fellow Scholars

**Table 1 Access to Teaching Scholarship components**

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programmes (Moon, Leach & Stevens, 2005) and similar projects in Malawi e.g. the Complementary Basic Education programme (Chakwera 2009; Pridmore & Jere 2011).

In Malawi, as in many developing nations, opportunities to experience the practical side of teaching and managing a classroom before taking on a teaching job are limited, and once installed in an overcrowded classroom teachers have little time to consider issues of pedagogy and child development. Previous studies have concluded that many trainee teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa can feel poorly prepared by their college courses for the demanding realities of classroom life; Akyeampong and Lewin (2002: 344) suggest that many beginning teachers experience a 'reality shock' when they first start as qualified teachers. In Malawi (as elsewhere) an education system based on achievement of specific examination results provides little opportunity to consider the nature of the school curriculum, the application of subject knowledge in the primary classroom, or theories of learning and teaching.

The Scholarship programme in Malawi therefore serves several functions as an apprenticeship: participants have ongoing opportunities to apply their developing academic knowledge in the practical context of the primary school, they support teaching and learning in overcrowded classrooms, they act as role models for girls in the school, and they have a low risk way to find out if they remain committed to teaching when exposed to the realities of a rural classroom. The period of apprenticeship is designed to prepare Scholars and enable them to develop 'professional experience capital' as potential teachers (Akyeampong & Stevens, 2002), but it is understood that not all Scholars will go on to become teachers. The work experience component may lead some women to decide that teaching is not for them. The academic study component of the apprenticeship is therefore important in enabling Scholars to pursue other kinds of work - but even without exam passes Scholars will be able to use their vocational experience to seek employment in rural schools as unqualified or assistant teachers.

Using Fuller and Unwin's Expansive-Restrictive Continuum (2010), the Scholarship can be seen to offer participants an experience of expansive apprenticeship in many aspects. The Scholarship structure expands in significant ways the models of apprenticeship which are traditionally available in Sub-Saharan Africa by providing work based learning for mature women and mothers in rural areas, promoting educational expectations, scheduling time off from work to study, and aiming to develop participants' confidence, life skills and academic skills in addition to their capacity to perform specific workplace tasks. The Scholarship

implements additional expansive elements by promoting female entry into a male dominated profession and providing a second chance to study for mature learners. Weaknesses in the apprenticeship can also be seen in: the isolated contexts for work and study, the varying levels of commitment of professionals who support the Scholars, and the lack of a clearly identifiable ‘provider’ in scattered rural areas to oversee and manage the programme.

<b>Expansive apprenticeship</b>	<b>Malawi Access To Teaching Scholarship</b>	<b>Restrictive apprenticeship</b>
Apprenticeship is used as a vehicle for aligning the goals of developing the individual and organisational capability	Work placements in rural primary schools to make an immediate impact on the quality of teaching in overcrowded classrooms; academic study to improve participants’ long term educational and employment opportunities	Apprenticeship is used to tailor individual capability to organisational need
Workplace and provider share a post-Apprenticeship vision: progression for career	FAWEMA supports participants in application to teacher training college or other further education or employment	Post-Apprenticeship vision: static for job
Apprentice has dual status as learner and employee: explicit recognition of, and support for, apprentice’s status as learner	Weekly timetable of vocational activity and academic study; participants recognized as adult learners and classroom helpers	Status as employee dominates: status as learner restricted to minimum required to meet Apprenticeships Framework
Apprentice makes a gradual transition to productive worker and expertise in occupational field	Participants help in classrooms and are not expected to take on a teaching role; in reality participants are often ‘forced’ to teach because qualified staff are absent	Fast transition to productive worker with limited knowledge of occupational field; or existing, already productive, workers as apprentices with minimal development
Apprentice is treated as a member of an occupational and workplace community with access to the community’s rules, history, knowledge and practical expertise	Participants role limited to what the supervising class teacher allows; work placements are in isolated rural areas, and in overcrowded classrooms there is little time to consider issues of pedagogy and child development	Apprentice treated as extra pair of hands who only needs access to limited knowledge and skills to perform job

Apprentice participates in different communities of practice inside and outside the workplace	Scholars meet in study circles and discuss progress with primary school mentor, secondary school subject tutor, family members, community elders, peers; regional events bring Scholars together to share experiences	Participation restricted to narrowly defined job role and work station
Workplace maps everyday work tasks against qualification requirements – qualification valued as adds extra skills and knowledge to immediate job requirements	Study materials link vocational activities to academic subject revision and to theories of learning and child development; participants struggle with academic component due to length of time away from formal study and lack of study support in the home	Weak relationship between workplace tasks and qualifications – no recognition for skills and knowledge acquired beyond immediate work tasks
Qualifications develop knowledge for progression to next Level and platform for further education	Aim for school leaving examinations pass and application to teacher training; opportunity to re-sit exams if not passed	Qualifications accredit limited range of on the job competence
Apprentice has planned time off the job for study and to gain wider perspective	1 day per week dedicated to academic study; tutorial venues are far from participants villages and participants struggle to keep up with study timetable  Study materials refer to wider regional and global contexts e.g. UNESCO and UN policies	Off the job simply a minor extension of on the job
Apprentice’s existing skills and knowledge recognised and valued and used as platform for new learning	Study materials refer to prior life and learning experiences and encourage reflection on what has been useful and valuable; study materials can put Scholars at odds with what they see in classrooms and are asked to do	Apprentices regarded as ‘blank sheets’ or ‘empty vessels’
Apprentice’s progress closely monitored and involves regular constructive feedback from range of employer and	Feedback, guidance and support provided by primary school mentor and secondary school subject tutor; support and expertise can vary depending	Apprentice’s progress monitored for job performance with limited feedback – provider involvement restricted to

provider personnel who take a holistic approach	on mentor and tutor practice and commitment	formal assessments for qualifications unrelated to job performance
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### **Apprenticeship successes and challenges**

Participant data and feedback illustrate successes and areas for development of the Scholarship programme. Retention of the first cohort has been good: 447 of the first wave of 500 Scholars completed the apprenticeship year (one Scholar died from complications in childbirth). Over 60% of these participants were attending their primary schools every day, and on average 50% were completing their School Experience practical activities. Scholars' written reviews and oral interviews suggest that their work in the primary school has enabled them to develop skills, work in an appropriate way with children and teachers, and consider issues of teaching and learning as they carry out practical tasks:

<b>Practical activities</b>	<b>Skills, Knowledge, Understanding and Reflection</b>
Prepare the classroom in the morning	Helping slower learners
Ring the bell to call learners inside the class	Stopping learners who are troublesome
Handing out books	Maintain quiet and discipline.
Organising assembly	The learners make a lot of noise. I make a song to stop noise.
Help the teacher in setting [up] a classroom library	Guiding learners to water seedlings
Beating the chalk board	Training girls in sports activities

Assist learners to sweep in and out of the classroom	Explain to learners how to use the library
Assist learners to sharpen pencils	Marking notebooks
Mark the register	I enjoyed helping learners reading and solving mathematics.
Singing songs and dancing with the learners	I enjoy giving praise to learners.
	I have learnt some factors to consider when arranging learners in groups, like putting learners in mixed ability groups.
	I have learned to explain things to learners without fear or shy[ness] and [how to] dress exemplary.
	I learnt that a teacher must be friendly to the learners to encourage them to come to school every day.

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1998) is evident in this feedback. Scholars can also be seen to benefit from the ‘short term value’ of improved experience of work (Wenger et al 2002:16) by gaining access to expertise, developing confidence, and being able to contribute to and participate in the life of the school. Participants can also be seen to develop aspects of the ‘long term value’ of work experience: fostering professional development by working with others, increasing their marketability and expanding their skills. Scholars’ describe their learning of pedagogical strategies (‘I make a song to stop noise’, ‘factors to consider’ in group work), the application of knowledge (‘how to use the library’, ‘solving mathematics’, marking notebooks and

delivering sports training), their understanding of what makes a good teacher and their growing confidence as apprentice teachers. Scholars have been observed sitting alongside children and moving around the classroom encouraging children to pay attention to the teacher – not unlike primary classroom teaching assistants in the UK and the USA.

School mentor written reviews and interviews indicate that Scholars are gaining recognition and respect in their communities, which increases their motivation to succeed:

*The fact that they are in the school - now people in the villages regard them as teachers and call them 'madam'. (Nchitsi mentor)*

*They do not want to fail [examinations] again...They don't want to return to the village having failed a second time – they would be worth nothing. (Dedza mentor)*

There is also evidence that the programme is impacting positively on the wider school community, as primary school mentors report that their own teaching practice is enhanced by mentoring Scholars:

*You improve your teaching skills in the process of assisting your Scholar.*  
(Dedza mentor)

*You update yourself and increase your knowledge and skills.*  
(Chikhwawa mentor)

*I remembered more things I learnt in the past.*  
(Nchitsi mentor)

Challenges are also evident in the vocational component of the programme. Scholar and mentor feedback separately and repeatedly reflects the isolation of rural life, gender violence, family-imposed barriers and variable on-the-job support:

- *Too many household chores*
- *Parents give us a lot of work, therefore [we] have less time for study*

- *We are forced to teach and write schemes of work*
- *Long distances to school make women prone to abuse*
- *Some teachers have a bad attitude towards Scholars*
- *Some parents are forcing the Scholars to get married*

In schools, the most persistent reported problem is Scholars being ‘forced to teach’ because qualified teachers are absent or take advantage of the presence of another adult:

*There is a tendency of qualified teachers sitting outside, chatting, and leave the classes with the assistants [Scholars] to teach/manage. (Mwanza Mentor)*

To improve the experience for subsequent cohorts, the Forum of African Women Educationalists has campaigned in rural areas to ‘sensitise’ families and communities about the Scholarship. Training for head teachers and mentors on how to intervene with non-compliant teachers has also been implemented for subsequent cohorts.

Scholar attendance at exam tutorials has been high - over 70% - even though tutorial venues (local Teacher Development Centres) are far from Scholars’ village and schools. Academic tutors, the majority of whom are male, describe the women Scholars as ‘resourceful’ and ‘ambitious’:

*They bring challenging topics for assistance. They even want to meet in between the week for more discussion (meeting every Friday seems not to be enough to them).*  
(Mwanza tutor)

*[They show] Endurance (walking long distances[to tutorials]). [They have] Hunger for knowledge. (Chikwawa tutor)*

A key concern is that less than 40% of Scholars report being able to keep up with the weekly revision tasks in the academic study guides; lack of time to study, lack of study support in the home, and lack of study resources (notebooks, pencils, additional subject textbooks) were reported as contributing factors. Tutors attribute Scholars’ difficulties to their prior school experiences and low achievement, their often lengthy absence from school, and the demands of family life.

*Their intellectual capability has decreased due to long stay in the village. Changes of curriculum over the years [are] also affecting them, e.g. English literature. (Mwanza tutor)*

*Absenteeism due to other family commitments. Lack of enough resources which retards progress. Lack of good background knowledge. (Mwanza tutor)*

The academic exam component is a demanding element of the apprenticeship programme. In Malawi as a whole, roughly 32% of boys and 27% of girls complete primary education; out of these numbers, approximately 30% of girls and 45% of boys go on to pass secondary school leaving examinations (Malawi government 2008). For subsequent Scholarship cohorts, mock exams and ‘day schools’ in maths and sciences have been provided.

The information and feedback gathered so far identifies some of the successes, obstacles and chronic problems of large scale apprenticeship in a developing nation which blends distance study and work experience and inducts other professionals to support novices. Scholars’ experiences and potential as students, community workers and apprentice teachers are restricted or enabled by a number of factors: the encouragement they receive from others at home, the time they have available to study, the quality of support they receive in the workplace, access to professional and study resources, and making personally relevant connections between work and study. There is much in common here with the experiences of distance learning and vocational students in other nations and contexts (cf Tedder and Biesta 2007; West et. al 2007) – with the additional significant challenges prevalent in Sub Saharan Africa related to isolation, gender violence, cultural expectations, few employment opportunities, limited schooling and lack of study resources (including electricity to read and write by). A key issue arising from the first cohort is organisational responsibility for the oversight of work and study locations and monitoring of the professional academic and vocational support for participants. The Forum of African Women Educationalists Malawi (FAWEMA) which organises Scholarship schools and participants locally has an encouraging rather than an enforcing role. Based on evidence and evaluation of the programme’s outcomes, the Malawi Ministry of Education - a national, clearly identifiable and high status

provider – has indicated interest in formalising the Scholarship as an alternative pathway to teacher training in order to rapidly increase teacher numbers.

The impact of expansive apprenticeship in this challenging context is the subject of on-going investigation, following the first and subsequent cohorts to investigate how their attitudes, aspirations and commitment to teaching evolve. It will be some years before a comprehensive evaluation can be completed; the number of Scholars who progress to qualified teacher status and whether they take up qualified or unqualified teaching roles in their communities will be key indicators. In the short term, there is evidence that additional adults are making a positive impact on learning in overcrowded classrooms, and women who had limited educational and employment opportunities are gaining skills and knowledge and also recognition and status in their communities. Beyond the specific context in Malawi, the Access to Teaching Scholarship promotes apprenticeship in a developing nation as it is widely understood and practiced in developed and industrialised nations: learning which links workplace activity with formal study, rather than positioning these as separate learning contexts with different kinds of outcomes. In planning, funding and organising projects to address chronic problems in developing world economies, international agencies and institutions could consider how an expansive apprenticeship model might help to create sustainable and flexible opportunities for employment and education.

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