



# STEP Research Series

- No. 1 -

**CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

**-THE BRIDGE FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL TO TERTIARY EDUCATION-**

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# Career Guidance and Counselling

## - the bridge from secondary school to tertiary education

A review of current guidance and counselling programmes and practices in Malawi and their support in promoting technical and vocational training for girls

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Form 3 and 4 students,  
Chilambula Community Day Secondary School

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

AUDCYD	African University of Guidance Counselling and Youth Development
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CDSS	community day secondary school
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FAWEMA	Forum for African Women Educationalists Malawi Chapter
G&C	guidance and counselling
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICT	information and communication technology
IEC	information, education and communication
KGIS	Keeping girls in school
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoLSYMP	Ministry of Labour, Youth, Sports and Manpower
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
NGO	non-governmental organization
PEA	primary educational advisor
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TEVET	technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training
TEVETA	Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

# Background

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In the Malawian context, career guidance and counselling (G&C) can play an important role in supporting the transition from school to career or tertiary education, keeping girls and vulnerable students in school, and addressing negative stereotypes of technical trades as well as encouraging young women to enter into technical trades. However, relatively little has been done to run G&C services in a comprehensive manner. According to the National Girls' Education Strategy (2014), only 2 per cent of secondary schools had an operational G&C programme in 2013.

There are different approaches to implementing career G&C services. In some countries with limited resources and competitive priorities, services are targeted at those who are most marginalized and have more challenges in securing employment: for example, people with disabilities, marginalized and vulnerable populations, and minorities. Services can also be provided to those in a transition period – the most common are targeted at students completing their basic education and deciding what type of further education and training is required for them to achieve their career goals.

Vocational G&C is seen as an effective bridge between school and work, and home and society. If done in an appropriate manner, it can ease the stress often experienced by students entering college, identify suitable careers and employment options for students, and ultimately support the economic development of a community. Most importantly, it could be an important tool to ensure the employment direction that best aligns with a student's strengths, interests and passion. In environments where there are competing priorities, weak political will and limited budgets, the important role of G&C is often decreased, or it is not included at all in the formal secondary school programme.

Girls are often held back from entering rewarding and prosperous employment because they have poor access to information on possible programmes, or career counselling that encourages them into traditional roles. Counselling that reinforces stereotypes limits the abilities of girls to achieve their fullest potential, perpetuates discriminatory attitudes towards women, and impedes the social and economic advancement of communities.

## I. Objective

The objective of this report is to identify and review existing career G&C programmes and practices in secondary schools in Malawi. The review assesses to what extent such programmes and practices create an awareness of the importance of technical careers and how graduates from the secondary schools can access TEVET. Additionally, it assesses whether any affirmative action measures or approaches are used to increase girls' interest in and applications to enter technical colleges.

## II. Methodology

### A. Desk review

A review was conducted of secondary literature including strategies, reports and guidance material.

## B. Data collection

Key informant interviews and focus group discussions were held in October and November 2016. In total, eight community day secondary schools and public and private boarding schools were visited, and eight administrators (seven female and one male), twelve teachers (four female and eight male), and thirty students (twenty-four female and six male) were interviewed. These schools were selected to provide a representative samples of the different types of school in Malawi. Officials in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) were interviewed, as were officials in the Technical, Entrepreneurial, Vocational, Education and Training Authority (TEVETA) and the Forum for African Women Educationalists Malawi Chapter (FAWEMA). In total, thirty-seven women and girls and seventeen men and boys were interviewed. The girls and boys at school were identified and selected by school administrators based on the criteria of being active students in Forms 3 or 4.

All key informant interviews were held separately with girls and with boys. This was done to create an enabling and comfortable space for the students to speak freely.

## C. Analysis framework

The findings were analysed based on the policies and practice of the G&C services. The findings were then categorized under the heading of MoEST, formal G&C in the different types of school, informal programmes outside of school, and programmes run by civil society organizations (CSOs).

The guiding questions for this review were:

- Career guidance and counselling policy
  - What types of policy are in place?
  - What are the content and main messages?
  - Are the separate needs of boys and girls identified in the policy?
- Career guidance and counselling material
  - What materials are available and used?
  - To what extent are these available and to whom?
  - What is the primary content?
  - How are girls and boys portrayed in the materials?
- Career guidance and counselling practice
  - In secondary schools, what are the formal career G&C programmes offered?
  - At whom are these programmes targeted?
  - What are the primary messages of the G&C programmes?
  - How do girls and boys experience these practices differently?
  - Do girls and boys receive different messages about appropriate careers they should pursue?
  - Does the G&C programme reinforce negative gender stereotypes or promote positive gender norms?
  - What are the informal ways in which students receive guidance on career and tertiary schooling options?
- To what extent does the practice raise awareness of the importance of technical careers, especially for girls?

## D. Consultations

The initial findings were shared with some of the key informants for their review and reflection on the recommendations. In December, the results of the study were shared at the UNESCO Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) Regional Forum for comments.

# Findings

The table below provides an overview of the findings of the research. The detailed results are further explained below. The analysis is organized around the different entities providing the policies or G&C services.

**Table 1:** Career Guidance and Counselling Analysis Table

Institution	Career guidance and counselling policy	Career guidance and counselling materials	Career guidance and counselling practice	Assessment – extent to which they create an awareness of the importance of technical careers, especially for girls
<b>Ministry of Education, Science and Technology</b>				
Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	No specific policy on G&C. G&C mentioned in National Education Sector Plan – teacher training for primary and secondary schools must include G&C (p. 21). TEVET must strengthen links with general education on career G&C (p. 22).	<p>No policy or strategy on career G&amp;C.</p> <p>National School Health and Nutrition Strategy or Plan – includes limited discussion on psychosocial issues.</p> <p>Draft concept note designed with TEVETA to break negative perception of TEVET in August 2015 but has not been acted on.</p> <p>National Girls Education Strategy</p> <p>Malawi Girls' Education Communication Strategy</p> <p>Curriculum – life skills course</p>	<p>No programmes, or standards developed.</p> <p>Rare ad hoc initiatives.</p>	<p>Implemented some initiatives with CSO using role models to encourage girls to stay in school. However all role models have desk-based jobs. No messages or information shared on entering TEVET.</p>

Institution	Career guidance and counselling policy	Career guidance and counselling materials	Career guidance and counselling practice	Assessment – extent to which they create an awareness of the importance of technical careers, especially for girls
<b>Secondary schools</b>				
Public boarding schools	No policy	For students and parents: no pamphlets, posters, or access to internet. For teachers/administrators: no support materials or curriculum.	G&C after-school club G&C committee	Messages focused on students entering university not TEVET
Private boarding schools	No policy	No materials	Matron provides career counselling on ad hoc basis, not through educational programme	Counselling focuses on university programmes and desk-based jobs
Community day schools, urban and rural		For students and parents: no pamphlets, posters, or access to internet. For teachers/administrators: no support materials or curriculum.	G&C after-school clubs – limited use by students	Messages focused on students entering university not TEVET
<b>TEVETA</b>				
TEVETA service centre	TEVETA Strategic Plan  Policy on G&C included in TEVET policy. Policy to increase access of girls and people living with disabilities to TEVET.  Standard outreach messages currently being developed by TEVETA for service centres to use to attract students.	Technical and Vocational Career Choices in Malawi (TEVETA and UNESCO, 2016)  Promotional videos, TV clips, radio announcements, phone-in shows, road shows, direct meetings with girls	Reach out to primary educational advisors (PEAs), teachers at some secondary schools and to girl students directly. Use promotional videos, TV clips, radio announcements, phone-in shows, road shows, direct meetings with girls to promote TEVET, to improve image of TEVET and increase girls' access.	Some positive messages of women in non-traditional roles.  Positive messages about TEVET as a post-secondary school option.
<b>Civil society organizations</b>				
Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED),  Forum for African women Educationalists Malawi (FAWEMA)		Scholar Progression Handbook: Keeping Girls in School and Access to Teaching Scholarship Programme (KGIS MATS Project, 2016).		Positive messages about TEVET as a post-secondary school option.  Positive messages of women in non-traditional roles.

## I. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

The following section presents the findings of the availability of guiding policies or strategies of MoEST related to G&C, support materials produced by the Ministry, initiatives conducted by the Ministry related to G&C and, to the extent possible, an assessment of the extent to which the policies, materials or practice create awareness of the importance of technical careers, especially for girls.

### A. Policy environment: national policies and strategies

There is no policy or regulation of MoEST that outlines what G&C is, how it is delivered, and to whom. Subsequently, there is no G&C programme with an approved content and delivery method. All school and government officials noted this and highlighted it as a priority step in systematizing career counselling in secondary schools.

It is stated in the National Girls' Education Strategy (MoEST, 2013) that there is a need for G&C programmes at both primary and secondary levels. The targets for delivering such a programme as shown in the Monitoring and Evaluation (Logical) framework are from 0 per cent in 2013 to 100 per cent of primary schools in 2015, and from 2 per cent in secondary schools in 2013 to 100 per cent by 2018 (MoEST, 2014).

Although the Girls' Education Strategy does support the transition from secondary school to tertiary education, it does not specify explicitly technical, vocational or entrepreneurial training. TEVETA is omitted as a responsible stakeholder in the strategy, and there are no indicators on female students' graduation from technical colleges, only from universities (MoEST, 2014, p. 38).

### B. Career guidance and counselling materials

A review of the National school health and nutrition strategic plan 2009-2018 found that there is some limited discussion of psychosocial issues. MoEST has drafted a concept note with TEVETA on initiatives to break the negative perception of manual trades, and training with TEVETA. However, the initiatives have not been acted upon.

Secondary schools do offer a Life Skills course. A review of the curriculum found that there is a section in the course on Entrepreneurship and the World of Work (MIE, 2012). See the text boxes below for the topics covered in this section for each form. The review shows that there is a strong focus on entrepreneurship skills development and business management. The programme does include specific coverage of identifying career goals and the job search process. The curriculum outline is vague however in the types of jobs that are discussed, and it is not clear whether manual trades and technical occupations are discussed as possible job options for the students.

**Form 1**

## Forms of employment

## Entrepreneurship

- Meaning of the term entrepreneurship
- Ways of becoming an entrepreneur

## Income-generating activities

- Meaning of income-generating activities
- Importance of entrepreneurship

## Skills required in income-generating activities

**Form 3**

## Business values and ethics

- Business, values and ethics
- Corrupt practices in business
- Business (corporate) social responsibilities

## Managing a business venture

- Qualities of a successful businessperson
- Key issues in financial management
- Practical taxation issues in business

## Different types of taxes to be paid by businesses

**Form 2**

## Setting up a business

- Process involved in generating a business idea
- Business skills that students have
- Market survey
- Skills required for conducting a market survey
- Suitable customers for businesses and their needs
- Resources needed for a business
- Ways of promoting business and customer care
- Strategies of dealing with aggressive competitors
- Accessing business services for people with physical challenges

## Estimation of income and cost for a business

**Form 4**

## Risk-taking and creativity in business

## Meaning of risk-taking in business

- Possible risks in business
- Skills for mitigating business risks
- Importance of creativity in business

## Job search strategies

- Career goals
- Matching goals to one's skills
- Job-seeking strategies
- Searching for a job
  - internet
  - newspapers
  - recruitment agencies
  - volunteering
  - magazines
  - networking
  - preparing for a job interview

## Saving culture

- Meaning of the term 'saving culture'
- Importance of saving
- Ways of saving
- Pension schemes
- Insurance

### C. Assessment of extent to which there are messages that create awareness of the importance of technical careers, especially for girls

According to interviews with MoEST officials, some initiatives with civil society organizations have taken place which encourage girls to remain in school. These initiatives use role models to inspire and encourage girls to remain in school. It was mentioned that the role models encourage girl students to go into desk-based jobs. During these events, there were no messages or information provided on students entering TEVET.

## II. Guidance and Counselling in Secondary Schools

The following section presents the findings of the G&C regulations in schools, services provided in secondary schools, the structures developed to deliver such services, availability of information materials, and the use of information technology to deliver the services.

### A. Formal regulations on delivering G&C services in secondary schools

When school administrators were asked whether there was guidance, a regulation or policy to implement a G&C programme, all said that there was not. They stated that there was no such guidance at either the national level or the school level.

### B. Career G&C services

According to the students interviewed, the persons who provide most career counselling are uncles and male friends of fathers. These people had jobs that the students are interested in, and the students were able to speak directly with the person to find out what courses and subjects were needed to enter that sector.

“

*We live in an area where people are very uneducated and there are no role models.*

Female student, Form 4, community day secondary school (CDSS)

”

When probed, some of the students said that a teacher guided them in selecting the right job. However, this guidance was provided in an ad hoc manner. The students stated that there was not a specific period or time in the timetable for guidance on career selection. In one school in Lilongwe, the students said that the teacher did provide some guidance but it was not in-depth and not very clear. The information was provided during class and was rushed.

### C. Guidance and counselling structures

In some of the schools visited, there was an infrastructure that supported G&C. This included a G&C committee made-up of three or four teachers who were appointed by the head of school. In some schools, there was an after-school club called the guidance and counselling club.

#### 1. Guidance and counselling committees

The G&C committees were charged with supporting students who were facing difficulties in their homes, encouraging students to perform well academically and organizing career talks. Some of the committee members were sent on short training courses to help them better perform their role.

However this was done on an ad hoc basis. For example, committee members at one community day school had been given special training on how to support children affected by HIV or who were HIV positive. MoEST officials corroborated this, and said that training to teachers in the area

of guidance focused on supporting teachers to care for students whose families had been affected by HIV. Other teachers said they had received some training by a non-governmental organization (NGO) on mental health counselling. Teachers complained that those who attended short training courses did not then share the materials or information from the training with the other teachers.

There was not a clear criterion for selecting members of G&C committees, although all of the members interviewed expressed a genuine interest in and concern for the students, and some had taken courses on counselling while working towards their teaching certificate. Teachers shared the information that most of their focus was on supporting students who were in challenging domestic situations. For example, students who came into urban areas from rural areas often stayed with a guardian, and at times this proved difficult for them. In most cases the teachers felt that providing emotional guidance took a higher priority than providing career counselling.

## 2. After-school clubs

Of the eight schools visited, the majority had after-school clubs and a few had G&C clubs. A teacher organized these and any student who wanted could attend. The clubs are aimed at students from all forms and are open on a voluntary basis to both female and male students. Of the students interviewed, only a few knew of the G&C club and only one was a member. This limited participation may be because the research was conducted at the beginning of the year and the clubs were not well established or publicized. A school administrator said that there was limited attendance at the club because students travelled a long way to school and did not have the opportunity to stay for long after school.

In one community day school, young girl students spoke of a Girl Guides group that met after school. The purpose of the group was to build the self-esteem and confidence of girls, and for them to discuss values and to provide peer support to do well in school. The members also raised money for the tuition fees for girls who could not afford to continue at school. Additionally, they made and distributed cloth menstruation pads to give to female students so that they could remain in school during their menstruation.

## 3. Career talks and career fair

Students at the public boarding school spoke of career talks being held at their school. However none of the students had attended them. One administrator mentioned that a woman business owner in the agribusiness sector had come to share with students her experiences of running a business in the agriculture sector.

Both students and teachers mentioned that Bwaila school had at one point organized a

“

*We learn about careers from the newspaper and we get ideas from books.*

Female student, Form 3, CDSS

”

“

*The most effective method to inform girls about post-secondary schooling options is through peer mentors – girls who come back to the school after entering a college or university and talk to the other girls about how they did it.*

Female student in a boarding school

”

career fair, and a small number of students from Forms 3 and 4 in the surrounding schools were invited to attend. When probed about the types of careers and programmes discussed and who spoke at the career fair, the students were not able to remember who spoke and about what careers. The students were not given any materials to take home.

“

*In our life skills course we learn about self-awareness, how to emulate, work hard and be confident.*

Male student, Form 3, CDSS

”

“ The review also looked at what type of psychosocial support secondary students receive from their schools. It was important to understand this support as the high drop-out rate of girls is often caused by conflict and issues they are facing in the home or school (MoEST, 2012a).

*The biggest challenge girls have to remain in school are money and peer pressure to marry early.*

Female student in boarding school

”

In the boarding schools, the matron played an important role in listening to the students and providing them with advice and guidance. The matrons said that they did not have any specific training in this area. However they felt it was their role to offer advice, especially as the students had limited access to their parents during the school term.

One of the appropriate places to discuss career options is during life skills courses.

This is a course that is offered from Forms 1 to 4. The life skills course includes issues such as trade, globalization, relationships, citizenship, democracy and entrepreneurship. Some teachers suggested that the life skills course was going to be removed from the official curriculum and that it would not be an examinable course.

#### D. Level of technology use

None of the students or teachers interviewed said that technology was used to research post-secondary school options. None of the students had their own phones or computers, and there were no computers or internet access available to students in any of the schools. A few students said they could use their parent's smartphone at the weekend to check their Facebook account. Of all the schools visited, only one had a computer lab, and this had no internet access. The majority of schools did not have a computer lab, and students are not given training on how to use computers or access the internet to conduct research.

#### E. Information materials

In the schools, there were no information materials made available to students on career choices, educational options or ways to identify career choices. There were no such posters in the colleges. However there was one poster in a technical school about a university, with information on how to apply. The libraries did not have booklets on education or training options.

At career talks or career fairs, students could not recall receiving any hard copies of information, and they had nothing to share with their parents when they returned home.

As almost all the schools visited did not have computer labs, soft copies of career counselling material were also not available.

## F. Career guidance and counselling messages delivered in schools

### 1. Gender stereotyping

When asked what type of job they wanted to have, the female students said they wanted to be lawyers, journalists, doctors, soldiers, surgeons or business people, while the boys wanted to be journalists, business people or lawyers. A few students wanted to work for the government as health specialists. What stood out in the responses was their desire to have a job that would make Malawi a better place. The female students particularly wanted jobs that would have a positive impact on Malawians. The students noted problems or serious issues in their community and wanted to change it. For example, one girl wanted to be a brain surgeon because she knew of only one brain surgeon in the country and knew Malawi needed more. Another young woman wanted to be a lawyer to protect those who were abused and violated.

“

*I want to be a soldier and help make Malawi a safe place. I learned about this career from my uncle who is also a soldier*

Female student, form 3, CDSS

”

It is difficult to assess whether teachers delivered gender stereotyping messages to students when discussing possible job options, as there were few occasions when career guidance was given. Similarly, in the secondary schools visited, there were no or limited posters on the walls, so it is difficult to assess the type of messaging used in information, education and communication (IEC) materials.

Of the teachers and administrators who participated in the study, none expressed any awareness of limitations on the types of career that girl students might pursue. In a private school, an administrator said that girls were encouraged to be doctors and nurses but not teachers. Of the girl students who participated, none mentioned any restrictions related to gender roles in the type of career they were going to pursue.

These findings are in contrast to numerous studies in Malawi that suggest that girls are often directed to traditional female jobs such as nurse or teacher (MoEST, 2013; WLSA-Malawi and University of Malawi, 2015).

### 2. Desk-based or manual jobs

In the interviews with teachers, none knew any details about options in technical college and vocational training, or the process of enrolling, timing of applications or even types of programme offered. The focus in what guidance was given to students seemed to be on types of desk-based job, and programmes offered at universities.

### 3. Employed or employer

The majority of respondents wanted to be employed by a government or agency. This was in

contrast to the message the teachers were giving, that the students should look to create jobs for themselves as entrepreneurs. All teachers said that because of the poor employment rate, students should not rely on the government or other employers for jobs. Only two respondents, one boy and one girl, wanted to run their own business.

### III. Guidance and Counselling Outside of Secondary Schools

#### A. TEVETA

TEVETA has a recruitment process to inform students about technical colleges, to encourage them to apply and to ultimately recruit students to TEVET programmes. Although this is not guidance or career counselling, it is an effort to inform students about their options.

According to the TEVETA Annual Report 2015–2016 (TEVETA, 2016), in that administrative year TEVETA provided career guidance sessions and reached 1,876 girls in twenty-one schools. It is not clear whether there were twenty-one sessions provided, or three sessions to which twenty-one schools were invited. The sessions were targeted specifically at girls, and encouraged them to enter TEVET (TEVETA, 2016, p. 19). TEVETA also held information sessions on TEVET training with primary schools (covering 180 students in total, 90 girls and 90 boys), and held a symposium with forty-five primary education advisors (PEAs) to inform them of TEVET options (TEVETA, 2016, p. 22).

There are three TEVETA service centres that cover the northern, central and southern regions. Each centre is considered an arm of the TEVET Authority, and is responsible for implementing the policies, programmes and regulations developed by the TEVET Authority. Among the services implemented at the centres are outreach to potential students and recruitment of students. According to interview respondents, service centres have a number of means and channels to reach potential students. The first and most significant initiative is to brief PEAs who are then responsible for returning to their regions and briefing primary school teachers. Additionally, the service centres invite secondary school teachers to information sessions, where they are given information sheets and a slide presentation on vocational training options. The service centres also meet directly with students, particularly female students, and using women graduates as role models, inform them of the options for entering skilled trades. Particular efforts have been made recently to target secondary schools in the rural southern region of Malawi, with financial support from UNESCO.

Other innovative efforts used as part of TEVETA's recruitment process are newspaper announcements, radio programmes and phone-in shows, road shows, the use of well-known comedians to attract young people, and videos promoting TEVET on television.

Some of the primary messages delivered through the TEVETA service centre outreach initiatives are:

- TEVET is important for the development of Malawi.
- Skilled manual trades provide a respectable form of work in which there are many job opportunities.
- Young women are encouraged to apply for TEVET.
- It is desirable for women to enter the traditionally male-dominated trades.
- Vocational training equips people to be employers and to run their own businesses.
- With the TEVET attachment programme, trainees can start to earn a small salary after only one year of study.

A review of TEVETA materials shows that there are positive images of women involved in manual trades. However, there are fewer images of people living with disabilities working in manual trades.

There are limited messages encouraging persons with disabilities to apply for TEVET, as the majority of government and private institutions are not physically accessible to them. TEVETA does have an agreement with the Malawi Council for the Handicapped, which has a vocational training centre for persons with disabilities.

The TEVETA service centres focus more on informing teachers at primary school level rather than secondary school. According to our key informant interviews with government officials, although there have been a few workshops, there has been no formal agreement or programme between the MoEST and TEVETA to develop a strategy or coordinated programme to support the transition of students from secondary school to technical colleges.

### B. Civil society organizations

There are a number of organizations that support girls' education in Malawi. We selected the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) and Forum for African Educationalists Malawi (FAWEMA) as they were known to run support programmes to help students, particularly female students, to make the transition to higher education or employment.

Discussions with the programme managers found that FAWEMA recently produced a handbook, *Keeping Girls in School: Access to Teaching Scholarship Programme* (KGIS MATS Project, 2016b). In addition to providing information on teaching programmes, the manual also provided information on TEVET training options, how to apply for scholarships and training programmes, how to look for work and prepare for interviews. There were positive messages about TEVET as a post-secondary school option and about women holding non-traditional jobs that did not conform to gender norms.

### C. Role models

The student respondents often used the term 'role model' when discussing how they were guided or attracted towards a career. For example, a female student in a community day school said that there was a journalist on television whom she admired and would like to emulate. This was a common response among the female students, and the model might be a radio or television announcer or even a fictional character in a television programme.

Students said there were no or few people in their communities who could act as role models. In most cases, students came from economically poor backgrounds and few adults in their communities had secondary or tertiary education. Within their community, there were few people with whom they could discuss tertiary education options, or career and job options that were outside the norm in that community.

In rural schools, the teachers had often not attended university or technical college and therefore did not have the first-hand experience that would enable them to encourage or explain to students about entering tertiary education.

# Analysis of Findings

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## I. Positive Aspects and Opportunities for Guidance and Counselling

In the course of this review, we identified a number of positive aspects in relation to career G&C, as well as opportunities that could be built upon. These are listed below, categorized by those within and outside secondary schools.

### A. Within secondary schools

#### 1. Girl learners have high ambitions and motivation

The female students interviewed in this review had high career ambitions and did not seem deterred by obstacles. They had set their dreams on demanding careers in areas such as journalism, law and medicine. This drive and motivation can be encouraged and supported, and used to motivate other students.

#### 2. Dedicated teachers

Despite their lack of resources, teachers were committed to supporting students. The teachers and school administrators interviewed expressed a strong interest and dedication to support students to overcome obstacles, perform well academically and have high achievements. This dedication was demonstrated despite the high number of students they are responsible for and the limited resources available to them.

#### 3. Academic study groups

In the community day school, after the regular school day, students continue to stay at school and form academic study groups. These sessions need to be held under trees or where shade can be found, as the classrooms are used in the afternoon by older students who are studying for the Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE) through a distance learning programme and open learning. The teachers provide questions for the students to discuss, but the teacher does not work directly with the students. If material was developed and available, these groups could be used as an opportunity to discuss and learn more about the job market, availability of training programmes, and application processes.

#### 4. Guidance and counselling school committees and clubs

As mentioned in the section above, some secondary schools have G&C school committees and clubs. Although the performance varies between secondary schools, there are good infrastructural base to build upon to strengthen counselling service provision in a systematic manner.

## B. Outside of schools

### 1. Guidance and counselling initiatives of NGOs

FAWEMA has developed a useful booklet (KGIS MATS Project, 2016) on post-secondary school options in their support to increase female students' transition to teacher training college. The booklet not only informs readers about teacher training colleges, it also provides details on other vocational training and university options. It was developed as part of the Keep Girls in School project.

### 2. Mother groups

Mother groups consist of women in the community that are supportive of keeping girls in schools. Although mother groups were not active in the schools involved in this review, they are widely seen as a strong support mechanism to keep girls in school and to provide a link between school and community. Many CSOs have been involved in strengthening the capacity of these groups. Such a support mechanism provides a unique opportunity to build the capacity and knowledge of parents on job and training options post secondary school, to support the removal of negative gender stereotypes and job norms for women, and to support girls to transition from secondary school to tertiary education.

### 3. Outreach by TEVETA service centres

The review of the current initiatives conducted by TEVETA to recruit students illustrates that there are some innovative youth-focused approaches being used. The messaging is positive regarding the types of vocational job available, as well as opportunities to turn vocational skills into a prosperous business. There are many positive images and messages for women to break stereotypes and to enter traditionally male-dominated work areas.

The challenge however remains that the reach of the messages is limited. They are not focused on secondary school administrators, teachers, students and parents of secondary school students to the degree needed to make an impact, and the messages are not standardized. Although some IEC materials are produced, they are difficult to access.

### 4. Mainstream media

Both male and female students from Form 2 and up said they read a number of mainstream newspapers including Nation and Daily Times. The popular television stations are MBC, TIMVENI (Listen to us) and Zodiak, while the popular radio stations are Zodiak and MBC radio 2. A number of students recommended using these information channels to inform potential students of TEVET. They felt this strategy would be the most effective as the messages would reach many students.

“

*If there is a program on TV that shows my reality and it encourages us students to stay in school and to get skills, then that would have a big impact on me.*

Male student, form 4, CDSS

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### 5. Guidance and counselling training centres and programmes

Lilongwe hosts the Guidance, Counselling and Youth Development Centre for Africa (GCYDCA),

an inter-ministerial organization developed under ministries of education across Africa. It was set up in 1994, and the African University for Guidance, Counselling and Youth Development was an offshoot of the original centre. According to the centre's management, in the last two years approximately 177 Malawian administrators or teachers have enrolled and completed the guidance and counselling certificate course or diploma. In addition to the diploma programme, it offers short courses sponsored by development partners, on specific issues such as mental health or support for students affected by HIV. The university used to offer a certificate programme; however this is being phased out. It currently offers a diploma programme of 18 months, and it is possible to use the diploma as a stepping-stone to enter university for a counselling degree.

In the diploma programme, there are ten modules which were developed by UNESCO. The topics include gender equality, entrepreneurship, HIV AIDS, behaviour modification, social work and career development.

In the area of guidance, four areas are taught: educational guidance, social guidance, personal guidance (how to contribute to your society) and vocational guidance (how to choose a career). However, the information and course material delivered is not specific to Malawi. Therefore, details on technical college programmes offered, the enrolment process and job prospects in Malawi itself are not included in this course.

According to teachers interviewed, there is an optional course on G&C offered at teacher training colleges, and universities in Malawi offer a Master's degree in Guidance and Counselling. It is not mandatory for teachers to take the G&C course when studying for their teaching certificate.

## II. Challenges for Guidance and Counselling

The review revealed a number of challenges, which relate to the limitations of career G&C services offered, their reach, and the support mechanisms including regulations. Below we outline these challenges.

### A. Formal regulations on delivering guidance and counselling services in secondary schools

The lack of a G&C policy at the national level is a challenge, as there is no overall guidance or standard set for the type of G&C service in schools. Similarly, there is not a specific G&C programme.

“

*In my opinion, there needs to be a policy from the ministry that specifies the type of guidance and counselling to deliver. This is especially required in rural areas because the teachers do not have any access to information there and do not know how to deliver counselling.*

School administrator, boarding school

”

### B. Limited incentive for teachers to provide guidance and counselling services

There are currently no financial or performance incentives for teachers to offer guidance services in secondary schools. Unlike some other southern African countries, Malawian teachers who are also counsellors do not receive an increased salary for delivery of this service. In addition, Malawian secondary schools offer no posts just for counsellors, such as are found in other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries such as Botswana.

“

*The time students need the most support from teachers is when they receive the results from their MSCE. They need to decide what to do but no one is responsible for them at that point.*

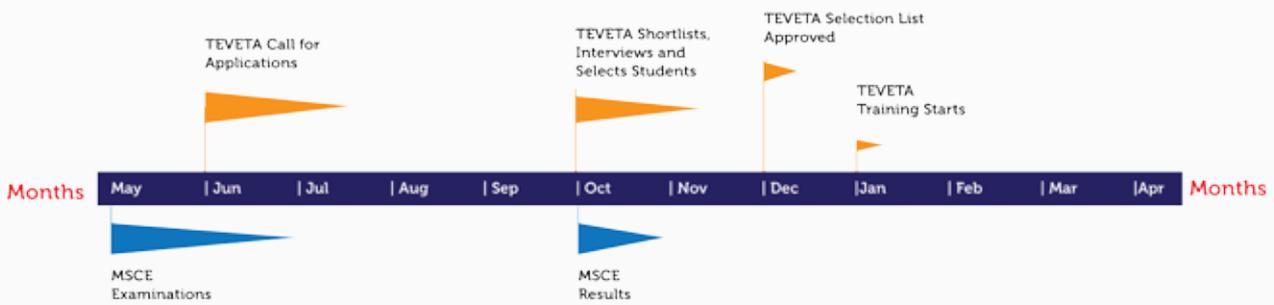
School administrator, private school

”

registration for technical colleges starts in May. Potential students have six weeks to apply, and applications are closed by end of June. The technical college entrance exams take place in October. The list of successful students is sent to the Minister of Labour, Youth, Sports and Manpower for review and approval, and the list of students is finalized in December. The technical colleges start their programmes in January.

**C. Large time lapse between receiving the results of the MSCE and starting tertiary education**

The review found that there is at least a 14-month gap between completing secondary school and starting a tertiary education programme. Students sit for the MSCE in May–July and the results are released in late October. However,



This large time lapse is particularly difficult for young women, who are at risk of not continuing their studies because they come under pressure to marry and have children, or to take on poorly paid insecure jobs while waiting for college to begin. The time lapse also affects the dropout rates of students, because it is a long wait from when the student applies in May or June until they receive the results in December. In addition, if they are successful, they only have a few weeks’ notice to prepare for the course, and often to move so they can attend the college, before the programme begins. January is also a time when many families have a large financial burden, and this affects their ability to pay the college fees.

**D. Low MSCE pass rate**

A large percentage of students do not pass the MSCE. According to the Education Management Information System, only 49 per cent of the female applicants passed the MSCE, compared with 59 per cent of males (MoEST, 2014). As Table 2 shows, of the schools involved in this review, the community day secondary schools have low pass rates and an extremely low rate of acceptance into university. The boarding schools and the private schools have better rates, but they are generally still low.

**Table 2:** MSCE entry, pass rates, and access to university

SCHOOL	2013/14						2014/15						2015/16					
	Attempted		Pass		Selected to public university		Attempted		Pass		Selected to public university		Attempted		Pass		Qualified for public university selection	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Bwaila Sec School	168	106	144	93	4	4	145	106	113	89	12	8	151	145	126	123	77	55
Chigoneka CDSS	60	46	40	38	8	3	50	36	37	28	9	5	51	47	37	18	18	11
Chilambula CDSS	34	23	17	8	0	0	37	17	16	8	0	1	39	16	20	5	4	
Lilongwe Girls Sec Sch		229		204		92		227		218		89		220		201		92
Mai Aisha Pvt Sec Sch	7	5	5	7	4	2	14	0	14	0	1		5	3	5	3	1	1
Nanjati CDSS	29	17	8	3	0	0	24	16	9	4	0	0	14	11	9	7	2	0

This data raises three broad issues. First, it is important to explore why female students have a much lower pass rate than males. Second, it is clear that a large percentage of students are not able to continue into tertiary education, either because of their poor results at secondary school, or because there are limited spaces available. Third, schools appear to be focused on students moving on to university, yet it is apparent that this is the destination of only a minority of them. For the majority of students, the last years in secondary school are likely to signal the end of their formal education. Yet it is unclear whether the curriculum has prepared them for entering employment or has provided them with enough life skills to be active citizens.

It should also be noted that secondary schools do not monitor the number of their graduates entering technical colleges, only university.

Recently the secondary school curriculum has changed, and those graduating in 2017 will be the last to follow the old curriculum. Students raised the issue that this cohort would find it difficult to redo Form 4 if they failed the exam, because of the change in curriculum. Some believed that if they failed, they would need to start from Form 1 again in order to follow through with the new curriculum.

#### E. After-school clubs

The review shows that teachers and administrators knew about G&C clubs. However few students were aware of them, and none of the students interviewed had participated in such a club. Further effort is needed to raise awareness of these clubs with the student body and to make the activities in the club attractive for students.

#### F. Engaging parents

None of the schools had specific outreach to parents to inform them of career paths or post-secondary school options. As parents play a significant role in supporting students, this is an important group to engage and involve in G&C. Using parent–teacher associations is one pathway to inform parents. However, since not all parents participate in these, significant efforts will be needed to reach all parents.

#### G. Teachers and administrators lack of knowledge of the TEVET system

Of the teachers and administrators who participated in this review, few had an understanding of the types of programme offered in technical colleges, the length of programmes, the apprenticeship and work experience aspect of vocational training, and the types of job or business opportunity that the TEVET system supported. None had any information materials from technical schools for their own use or to distribute to students.

#### H. Limited support and guidance for teachers as counsellors

Although some teachers were directed to provide guidance services, they were not provided with support materials, standard messages or information to share, or approaches to take. There is no direction from MoEST on the standard of delivering career counselling, or on the content to deliver.

#### I. Lack of ICT usage

There are many useful websites and web-based programs that could support career information services and increase access to accurate and current data. However, both students and teachers have no or limited access to computers and the internet. Most of the schools visited did not have computer labs, few students knew how to use computers, and none of the schools had access to the internet.

#### J. Sustainability of guidance and counselling organizations and initiatives

It has been known for many years that the G&C services provided through secondary schools and even through the private sector are generally weak. Initiatives have started (booklets have been produced, career talks held), a little training has been provided to teachers on counselling services, and conferences and workshops have been held to discuss the impact of poor provision of counselling services, and yet no sustainable change has occurred. Many of these initiatives relied on donor funding, and once the funding expired they ceased to operate.

The question that must be asked therefore is what factors need to be in place to make career counselling services 'stick'. If we look at the issue using an economic model of demand versus supply, we can see there is a high demand. Students involved in this study expressed a genuine interest in better understanding tertiary education options and how these pathways lead to different jobs. There was recognition among both teachers and students that their understanding of training and education options, as well as the types of job available and skills which led to high employment rates, was very limited.

The supply side is less clear. Although TEVETA service centres have some outreach to students, the reach is very limited and does not meet the demand. However, TEVETA has little incentive to create a wider reach when there are so few training positions to fill. There were 11,762 applicants (3,034 female and 8,728 male) for the 2016 entry examinations for pre-apprenticeship programmes. However only 1,514 students (426 female, 1,088 male) were selected (TEVETA, 2016). Training and tertiary education institutions clearly have no difficulty in filling the limited number of places available, so they have little incentive to reach out and inform students.

To incorporate career counselling into the formal secondary school curriculum would be a step

towards a sustainable and fluid education system. However, the challenge is that there is limited space in the curriculum and, currently there is some pressure to minimize it and focus on fewer core subjects at secondary level.

## Recommendations

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Based on the findings from the review, a set of recommendations is provided which builds on the identified opportunities, addresses the challenges, and is aligned with the TEVETA *Strategic Plan* (TEVETA, 2013) as well as the MoEST *National Education Sector Plan* (2008) and *Malawi Girls' Education Communication Strategy* (MoEST, 2012). The recommendations have been made and categorized based on the primary stakeholder responsible for the action. Implementing these recommendations would provide a comprehensive approach to building a gender-responsive career guidance and counselling programme which includes technical and skilled manual jobs as career options.

### I. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Develop a secondary school career guidance and counselling **policy** to set standards and the rationale for implementing guidance and counselling services.

Develop and implement a standard mandatory secondary school gender-responsive career guidance and counselling **programme** for teachers to implement. The comprehensive programme should be targeted at students as well as parents, and build on community support networks. The programme needs to extend beyond the MSCE and provide support for students for approximately 1.5 years after the exam, until they have entered tertiary education or the job market.

Develop and implement a **training programme for teachers** to run the career guidance and counselling programme.

Develop a **tracking system** to monitor the transition of students from secondary school to tertiary education (including technical colleges) or employment.

Secure appropriate **financial resources** to design the career guidance and counselling policy, programme, teacher training programme and tracking system.

To support the transition from secondary school to tertiary education, **reduce the time** between receipt of MSCE results and entry into technical colleges and universities.

In the new *Malawi Girls Education Strategy* (likely to be developed in 2018 or 2019), **include technical and vocational training** in tertiary education targets.

## II. Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority

Develop a **partnership with the MoEST** to support a smooth transition from secondary schools to technical colleges, and to build in awareness of vocational training programmes starting at primary level. This includes addressing incorporating technical colleges as part of a larger education plan and girls' education strategy, including advice and information on technical trades as part of guidance and counselling programmes, and addressing the large wait time between MSCE results and entry into technical college.

Build on outreach and recruitment initiatives conducted in the past two years and **scale up**, with a **focus on secondary schools** and specifically technical secondary schools. Continue to use innovative ways to reach students such as use of comedians, television clips, newspaper and radio announcements, road shows, and the use of role models.

Develop more **innovative and youth-friendly IEC materials and make available** hard copies to all secondary schools.

To address the negative image of technical trades and the perception that these trades are only for men, **expand the scope of the outreach and information sharing** on TEVET to community support mechanisms such as mother groups, youth groups, parents, and parent–teacher associations. Continue to use female role models to inspire and inform the target audience of the possibilities of careers in skilled manual work.

Increase the **use of mass media** such as popular television programmes to create a positive image of technical trades and break the gender stereotypes regarding technical trades.

## III. Secondary schools

### School administrators

Set up a **monitoring and support system** to track the students' direction and decisions after finishing secondary school. The mandate of secondary education is to support a transition to tertiary education. Thus, it is essential to track students' progression after secondary school completion.

Set up and resource a **guidance and counselling infrastructure** including a G&C committee, a G&C club, and resources in the library for students. Establish a formal terms of reference, work plan and measurable results for the G&C committee. Hold specific teachers accountable for implementing these activities, and specify the expected results in their work plans.

**Increase access by students, teachers and parents** to updated information about post-secondary schooling and training options by maintaining a library section on career possibilities and training options, populating information boards with university and technical college information, and providing regular announcements to students.

### Use of parent–teacher associations and executive committee

All schools have some type of outreach to parents, specifically through community day schools. Such committees can be used to help **inform parents** about their important role in informing, encouraging and guiding students to apply for tertiary education, including TEVET.

### Guidance and career counselling teachers

Develop **innovative information and interactive sessions** for students and parents to be informed about the wide scope of careers and how to enter them. Make use of career fairs, career talks, field trips, peer mentors and role models. These sessions can be enhanced by including leaflets/pamphlets from the speakers or the Ministry of Labour, Youth, Sports and Manpower Development, to ensure there are descriptions of the different types of job and training option. Ensure peer mentors and role models inspire young women by using women role models and female alumni.

Invite the TEVETA service centre to provide information sessions on **technical trades and training options** to all students, starting in Form 1. Ensure parents are invited and the session is held at an appropriate time to have full participation.

Support **career paths for students with different academic achievement levels. Look beyond the traditional, desk-based employment options**, and identify other types of job. Find entrepreneurs who can inspire the children.

**Incorporate guidance and counselling support messages into the school curriculum** and make time in the schedule for specific sessions on employment opportunities, entrepreneurial skills, post-secondary training options, and employment application processes. **Share any appropriate materials with all teachers** to ensure common messages are disseminated and to expand the reach of information.

# Conclusion

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The education challenges in Malawi are significant, and the data show that there are many gaps in the system and shortcomings in achieving results. Girls specifically fare poorly in the education system, with consistently low primary and secondary school graduation rates, and very limited enrolment in universities. In technical colleges, female attendance is also low. However there has been a gradual increase.

This review shows that there is no coherent and systematic career guidance and counselling programme or policy in Malawi. However, there are some career counselling initiatives which, if expanded and incorporated into the secondary school system, have the potential to provide much-needed support to students and parents as they contemplate navigating the post-secondary schooling and employment options.

The review found that there are some career guidance initiatives that specifically target female students, and other initiatives that have incorporated special attention to female students into their guidance. Some efforts have been made to address gender stereotypes that restrict girls' entrance into traditionally male trades. However this is not supported by a policy or a thoroughly developed programme. The outcomes are therefore constrained by teachers' own experience and perceptions of what employment is acceptable for women. To address cultural norms that are deeply embedded in beliefs and community practices, a comprehensive approach is needed.

In the secondary school systems, there was limited evidence that teachers informed students of employment options in the technical trades, or the types of technical and vocational programme offered by colleges. None of the schools visited had any materials for students or teachers on employment options, and only IEC materials were available for universities.

This report is part of the move towards developing a comprehensive approach to a career guidance and counselling policy and programme that meets the needs of secondary school teachers and most importantly, secondary school students.

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## Annex A: List of key informant interviewees and focus group participants

Name	School / Organization	Position
Mr. Goliath Chiziba	AUGCYDC	Programme manager
Mr Dete	Biwi CDSS	Teacher
Mr Longwe	Biwi CDSS	Teacher
Mr Mzungu	Biwi CDSS	Member of G&C committee/teacher
Mr Steven Banda	Bwaila Secondary School	Technical education teacher
Ms Kaliwo	Bwaila Secondary School	Head teacher
Ms. Jacqueline Nkhoma	Bwaila Secondary School	Student
Ms. Nancy Kankonde	Bwaila Secondary School	Student
Ms. Rachel Semphere	Bwaila Secondary School	Student
Ms. Taonga Banda	Bwaila Secondary School	Student
Mrs Benadette Chitwere	Chigoneka CDSS	Head teacher
Ms Jessie Nathava-Sapala	Chigoneka CDSS	Member of G&C Committee/teacher
Ms. Gladys James	Chigoneka CDSS	Student
Ms. Louisa Moyo	Chigoneka CDSS	Student
Ms. Mphatso Meja	Chigoneka CDSS	Student
Mr Chirambo	Chilambula CDSS	Deputy head teacher
Mrs Catherine Banda	Chilambula CDSS	Member of G&C Committee/teacher
Ms. Esther Kalima	Chilambula CDSS	Student
Ms. Melestina Gonolinje	Chilambula CDSS	Student
Ms. Modesta Maulana	Chilambula CDSS	Student
Mr. Don Kabata	Chimutu CDSS	Student
Mr. Khembo L Khembo	Chimutu CDSS	Student
Mr. Steven Kola	Chimutu CDSS	Student
Mrs Mwambira	Chimutu CDSS	Deputy head teacher
Ms. Eureka Mainga	Chimutu CDSS	Student
Ms. Mphatso Mapulanga	Chimutu CDSS	Student
Ms. Unique Kasonda	Chimutu CDSS	Student
Mrs. Hendrina Giva	FAWEMA	Executive director
Mr Charles Lipenga	Lilongwe Girls Sec School	Teacher
Mr Macmillan Mwale	Lilongwe Girls Sec School	G&C Committee chairperson/teacher
Mr Nkhwazi	Lilongwe Girls Sec School	Teacher
Mrs. Idah Kamoto	Lilongwe Girls Sec School	Head teacher
Ms. Cynthia Dziko	Lilongwe Girls Sec School	Student
Ms. Eluby Kawanga	Lilongwe Girls Sec School	Student
Ms. Ireen Ngozo	Lilongwe Girls Sec School	Deputy head teacher
Ms. Makanash Nyakambiri	Lilongwe Girls Sec School	Student
Ms. Sera Mtambo	Lilongwe Girls Sec School	Student
Mr Phiri	Mai Aisha Private Sec Sch	Head teacher
Mrs Nyirenda	Mai Aisha Private Sec Sch	Teacher

Name	School / Organization	Position
Mrs. Azima Farid	Mai Aisha Private Sec Sch	Senior supervisor
Ms Fatima Kadango	Mai Aisha Private Sec Sch	G&C/matron
Ms. Ashe Mwawanda	Mai Aisha Private Sec Sch	Student
Ms. Fatima Abudulkhalim	Mai Aisha Private Sec Sch	Student
Ms. Sakina James	Mai Aisha Private Sec Sch	Student
Mr. Blessings Chakana	Nanjati CDSS	Student
Mr. Geoffrey Hatahata	Nanjati CDSS	Student
Mr. James Chirwa	Nanjati CDSS	Student
Mrs K Chisale	Nanjati CDSS	Member of G&C committee/teacher
Mrs. Lois Kumtamula	Nanjati CDSS	Head teacher
Ms. Chisomo Magalasi	Nanjati CDSS	Student
Ms. Fahida Chakana	Nanjati CDSS	Student
Ms. Rose Phiri	Nanjati CDSS	Student
Mrs. Virginia Kachigunda	School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Department, MOEST	Director
Mr. Felix Nankhuni	TEVETA Secretariat	





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Funded by the EU and implemented by UNESCO in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, the Skills and Technical Education Programme (STEP) is dedicated to reinforcing Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) in Malawi. The programme will run from 2016-2020 and aims to improve TEVET at post-secondary level with focus on equal access to enrolment, with particular focus on female learners; improving quality in the sector; and establishment of clear governance structures.

The STEP Research Series presents the highlights of the research undertaken by the programme.

The findings of the Career Guidance and Counselling study are presented in this first of a series of research outputs.

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