Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) hereinafter called the ‘Institute’ is a Government sub-vented institution established in 1979 through an order which was published as Government Notice No. 60 of 1979 under Education Act (CAP 30:01). It became operational in April, 1982. The Institute is located in Domasi, about 18 km from Zomba City. The Institute’s vision is to be a leader in curriculum development in Malawi and beyond. Its core values include professionalism, creativity and dynamism, stakeholder involvement, equity and equality, and respect for staff with a mission of to design, develop, monitor and evaluate the national school and primary teacher training education curricula and provide continuing professional development for education personnel in order to ensure that education responds to the current and future needs of society.

As such the Institute’s mandate is meant to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education standards in Malawi by:–

- undertaking, encouraging and coordinating curriculum development;
- carrying out research, evaluation and policy studies in education;
- assisting with the training of teachers;
- providing continuing professional development for teachers and other education personnel
- producing and publishing teaching and learning resources.
The Institute responsibility is fulfilled through the effective delivery of educational and related services through the following functional departments:

- Department of Curriculum Development (DCD),
- Department of School and Teacher Development (DSTD),
- Department of Research, Evaluation and Policy Studies (DREPS),
- Education Materials Development and Resource Centre (EMDRC),
- Department of Administration and Finance (DAF)

Through DREPS the Institute carries out educational research, evaluation and policy studies in Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Teacher Training Colleges with the view to providing the basis for informing the curriculum development process and formulating the policies that could facilitate the improvement of the quality of education in Malawi. DREPS also evaluates educational programmes and instructional materials in order to ensure that they are appropriate for the needs of the target group and the nation.

**THE DATA WE COLLECT**

The studies we carry out are mainly both qualitative and quantitative in nature and hence the data we collect is both qualitative and quantitative. We mainly combine the two to allow statistically reliable information obtained from numerical measurement be backed up by and enriched by information about the research participants' explanations. For instance, studies we have done in the recent past are:

- An evaluation of Initial Primary Teacher Education instructional materials for terms one and two
- An assessment on the quality of instructional materials for standard 5-8;
• An investigation on teachers attitude and behaviour towards Child-Friendly Schools;

• Baseline, mid-term and end-line studies for Read Malawi Program

• An assessment of Teachers’ Pedagogical Content Knowledge in English, Chichewa and Mathematics in Malawi.

In the near future we intend to do the following studies that are also both qualitative and quantitative in nature:

• An investigation into school culture: a case of eight successful secondary schools in Malawi;

• Assessing Teacher Trainers’ Pedagogical Content Knowledge in English, Chichewa and Mathematics in Malawi;

• A study on pupil attrition and repetition in primary education in Malawi;

• An investigation into school culture: a case of low achieving secondary schools in Malawi.

CHALLENGES IN COLLECTING DATA

However during our data collection exercise some of the challenges we experience are as follows:

• Limited funding- A section of research that is expensive to run is data collection exercise. Hence it is often necessary to ensure that funding is arranged in advance. If financial resources are lacking, costs can become a limiting factor in collecting the right type and amount of data needed to conclude the research. Costs are, usually, incurred in travelling, accommodation and subsistence allowances for data collectors. It also makes it difficult to purchase appropriate infrastructure for technology such as a consistent and
reliable access to internet service, software to analyse data and produce reports in time.

- The prevalence of missing or incomplete data - Some responses received may be of a questionable validity and, hence, not very useful in meeting the objectives of the research. It is likely therefore, that the rate of response might sometimes be unacceptably low.

- Time - Data collection takes a lot of time as it involves going out in the field to meet the research participants and interviewing them. In the process, it is possible that the participants sampled for interview, as an example, may not be available at the agreed time and, hence, rescheduling might have to be arranged which consequently has financial implications.

MODERNIZING DATA COLLECTION

The future plans for the Institute is to explore on how we could exploit the availability of mobile devices such as cell phones to collect valid and reliable data. With good investment we believe this could cut costs in data collection exercises.