Chapter 32
Integrating ICT in Secondary Teacher Education:
Case of Malawi's Education Policy Texts Since 2017

Foster Gondwe
University of Malawi, Malawi

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an analysis of education technology policy for integrating education technology in Malawi's secondary teacher education since 1994. The status of education technology research in Malawi, often in form of pilot studies evoked the study's questions: What policies are guiding the use of ICT in teacher education? How has education technology policy for secondary teacher education evolved? What have been the influencing factors for the education technology policies on secondary teacher education? What are the assumptions and rationale underlying such policies? Using Ball's contexts of policy making framework, the analysis shows that the evolution of education technology policy for secondary teacher education can be attributed to the aftermath of Free Primary Education in 1994. However, the reviewed policies show inconsistence, and suggest to have been formulated on speculations other than research conducted in the context within which such policies are intended to drive the desired changes.

INTRODUCTION

Educational technologies such as computers, Internet, software and tablets have been introduced (and continue to feature on the educational agenda) as one way of improving education quality, relevance and access in Malawi. The introduction of educational technologies has also had implications on other related sectors such as teacher education, curriculum development and education policymaking. This chapter particularly set to analyse policies related to integrating Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Malawi's secondary teacher education.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5631-2.ch032

The genesis of the study was that while shifts in education policies towards ICT/education technology are evident, the evolution, underlying assumptions and rationale of the policies have not received research attention. As Oyaid (2009) observed in Saud Arabia, despite the relative increase in the number of studies dealing with teachers' perceptions and factors related to them, the relationship between perceptions towards ICT and the policy that introduced it in the first place seems to be lacking in literature. In the case of Malawi, educational technology research is still in infancy; hence the knowledge gap is wider than what Oyaid (2009) reported about the case of Saudi Arabia.

Malawi's status of education technology research and practice can be summarized as follows. Firstly, practical use of the different technologies is in its trial stage. For example, Hollow and Masperi (2009) conducted an evaluation of portable learning technology program from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology called '*The Interactive Learning Program'*. The program involved distribution of 520 custom-made handheld interactive learning aids to 50 participating schools. In another case study, in 2016 Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) launched a project called *Unlocking Talent with Technology* aimed at piloting use of tablet technology to teach literacy and numeracy in standards One and Two of primary schools in Malawi.

Secondly, available research has mostly focused on the state of use of technologies in the higher education and primary school levels, leaving secondary education under-researched (see for example, Kadzera, 2006; Nyirongo, 2009; Pitchford, 2015). In fact, historically, limited secondary education research in Malawi is more apparent in secondary teacher education (Mtika, 2008). But evidence from studies conducted so far confirm that teachers' (including teacher educators) use of educational technologies has been very low. Pilot studies, such as one done by Pitchford (2015), also reveal that the use of technology such as tablets has the potential to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy in elementary school.

Meanwhile, in the face of such trials and gaps in research, some important questions yet to be answered include: 1) what is the policy environment guiding use of technology in education and teacher education in particular? and 2) how can such interventions be institutionalized for long-term gains? It is against the background of these questions that the chapter set to achieve the following: trace the evolution of Malawi's education technology policy for secondary teacher education since 1994; assess factors influencing the education technology policies for secondary teacher education; and discuss the assumptions and rationale underlying such policies. The study selected four ICT-in-secondary teacher education related policy statements for review: National ICT policy (2006; 2013); Education Policy Investment Framework (1995-2005, revised in 2000 to cover 2000-2015 period) and National Education Sector Plan (2008-2017) and National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development (2007).

Utilizing Ball's (1993, 1994) conception of policy to analyse the selected policy documents, the chapter argues that since 1994, the country's ICT in teacher education policy statements have been inconsistent, ambiguous and formulated on speculations other than grounded research conducted in the context within which such policies are intended to drive the desired change. The ambiguity is characterised by lack of clear goals, implementation strategies and poor conceptualization of education technology. Ambiguity and inconsistence are also evident in the lack of clarity regarding coordination among multiple policy implementing agencies suggested in the policy texts. In view of this, it is therefore likely that the policies have little or no influence on the actual practice of targeted beneficiaries such as teacher educators and training institutions who happen to be custodians of successful integration of ICT in teacher education.

The following is an outline of the chapter. It starts with a discussion on theoretical framework informing the policy analysis conducted. This is followed by a review of previous studies on *ICT in teacher*