

School experience

Theme 3: Classroom activities and learners' subject knowledge

Teaching assistant handbook



Forum for African Women
Educationalists in Malawi
(FAWEMA)

*"Supporting Girls and Women to
Acquire Education for
Development"*



The Open
University



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'Keeping Girls in School' Scholarship Programme

School Experience Year 1

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Theme 3 Unit 1

Activities for numeracy and mathematics

In Theme 3 we are focusing on activities and resources for supporting children's learning in the classroom. You will look at some of the Learning Areas of the primary curriculum – starting with Numeracy and Mathematics in this unit.

As you work through Theme 3, keep in mind your learning in Theme 2 about using local resources – human resources and natural resources – to support learners in the primary school.

In Units 1 and 2 you will make your own classroom resources and activities. We hope these activities will be fun for you, and that you will also find them useful for your own learning. In Unit 3 you will reflect on your first year of School Experience and how you will use this year's experience for your School Experience next year.

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

1. your understanding of mathematics and numeracy in everyday life
2. your knowledge of using locally available resources to support children's numeracy learning
3. your skills in planning and managing your study time.

In this unit you will find the following terms:

Mathematics: the subjects of arithmetic, geometry, algebra, calculus, and number signs and symbols – and how all of these subjects are related.

Numeracy: the skill of solving problems with numbers. A numerate person can solve problems with numbers in many different practical situations: counting, multiplying, dividing, measuring, estimating, and using graphs, charts and diagrams.

Timing

You have three study weeks to complete the reading and activity in this unit. Skim-read this unit now, so that you understand what you need to plan and do.

Study activity

Reading: Mathematics in everyday life and in school

Being numerate is essential in the life of every individual.

In fact, we use mathematical and numeracy skills and knowledge every day – without being aware of how we do it. Think about these activities:

- How many hours you sleep at night and what time you get up in the morning
- How much time you need to light the fire and get ready for the day
- The distance you travel to school and how long this journey takes you
- Choosing the quickest way to get to school on time
- Planning the numbers and weights of food to buy in the market – how many tomatoes and how much flour
- Paying the correct amount of money in the market and getting the correct change
- How much time you need to prepare a meal at home
- Knowing how much water to collect at the borehole – enough to fill the container which you must carry
- How much rice and water to put into the cooking pot
- Deciding how much food to give to each person

Each of these daily jobs requires skills of measuring (time, distance, quantity and weight), estimating, counting, adding, subtracting, dividing and multiplying.

There are other mathematical and numeracy skills which you use naturally in your everyday life:

- When you choose the biggest container which you can carry to collect water, you are using your knowledge of volume, weight, shape and space.
- When you buy cloth to make a wrap or a skirt, you are using your knowledge of size, length, width, and shapes (square, rectangle, circle, triangle) and you are estimating these shapes when you look at the piece of cloth.
- When you walk the most direct path to school – rather than taking a long, roundabout way – you are using your understanding of geometry: the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.

But the skills we use in everyday life can be very different from the mathematics we learn in school.

Real life example: Mathematics in the market and in the classroom

There was a large market where many children helped their parents on Saturdays. These children were between eight and twelve years old. A teacher went to the market to talk to children about the things they were selling. He asked the children questions such as:

Teacher: How much is one banana?

A girl, aged ten: 10 Kwacha

Teacher: I'd like six. How much will that be?

Girl: Sixty.

The teacher thought the children's numeracy was very good. In school, the teacher gave these children a written test that had the same type of number problems to solve. The children were given word problems to read such as:

Nabanda bought 6 bananas. Each one cost 10 Kwacha. How much did she pay altogether?

and number problems using symbols such as:

$$10 \times 6 = \underline{\quad\quad\quad} \quad \text{and} \quad 6 \times 10 = \underline{\quad\quad\quad}$$

When the children were working in the market, they were correct on their number problems 98 per cent of the time. They did these sums mentally, quickly and with confidence. But in school, when they had to solve the word problems, they were only 75 per cent correct, and with the number problems they made many mistakes and could give a correct answer only 37 per cent of the time.

Why?

The children were using different methods to solve the problems. For the written test in school, they used the methods they had learned in school, but they could not remember these methods very well. In the market, the children were able to remember very well the numeracy they needed for real-life situations.

What this example tells us is that number problems are easier for young learners when they are used in real life. We often do mathematics efficiently, successfully and with confidence in our daily lives – but we can feel unsure about mathematics in school.

Real life example: Chimwemwe and her mother

At Chinsapo Primary School, Chimwemwe in Standard 1 was very enthusiastic about learning mathematics. She was learning how to add. The teacher used stones to show the learners that 2 stones + 3 stones = 5 stones.

After school, Chimwemwe went home and told her mother that she was learning addition. Her mother liked to help Chimwemwe with her school learning.

Chimwemwe: Mother, in school today I learned that 2 stones + 3 stones = 5 stones.

Chimwemwe's mother: Very good my daughter! And also: 1 tomato + 4 tomatoes = 5 tomatoes, and 3 goats + 2 cows = 5 animals on a farm.

Chimwemwe: Oh no Mother, that is wrong! Addition is only 2 stones + 3 stones = 5 stones!

Chimwemwe thought that there was only one way to do addition. She became cross because she thought her mother was trying to confuse her!

Chimwemwe's mother: Look my daughter, I will show you. You can add anything – tomatoes, animals, trees, bananas. And there are many ways to add up to five. Let us take some buttons and beads from my sewing box. See how I move them around – you can have 1 button + 4 beads, 2 beads + 3 buttons, and so on...

Chimwemwe and her mother played with the buttons and beads so that Chimwemwe could understand how many ways to add up to five. Chimwemwe went back to school knowing more about addition.

Review

As you help learners in the classroom, try to find out what they know about numbers from their homes. As you help in numeracy lessons, think about these questions:

- What are the children learning in the lessons?
- What do the children already know about the numeracy topic? Where did they learn this from?
- Are there numeracy words or symbols which are confusing to the children? Are there other ways of explaining, or a practical example from life, which they could understand better?

Practical activity

Choose ONE of these activities to do during these three study weeks. Each activity is making a classroom resource for numeracy or doing an activity to support numeracy learning. When you choose, think about the girls you help and also about your own mathematical knowledge and learning. Do you think there are particular problems for girls in learning mathematics? How could these problems be overcome?

You can share the activity with other Scholars, and do it together. Talk to your teacher and your Mentor about your ideas. Try out the resource or activity with learners.

(1) Hunt the shapes

Ask the teacher if you can work with a group of learners.

Draw these basic shapes on the chalkboard, on large chart paper, or on the ground: circle, square, triangle, rectangle. Tell the learners the name of each shape. Let them practise drawing the shapes on the floor or in the air with their hands.

Tell the children you are going to look for these shapes, inside and outside the classroom.

Look around the classroom. What can you see? What shape is the chalkboard? What shape are the tables? What shapes can you see in the chairs?

Look outside the school, at the school building and at other buildings or signs. What can you see? What shapes can you see on the roofs? What shapes can you see on the sides of the building? Can you see any shapes in the trees or plants?

Learners can play 'Hunt the shapes' and learn to recognise shapes around them.

(2) Estimating the difference

This is a game you can play with a group of learners. You can do this estimating game with tins, containers or lengths of string. You can also play the game with distances and heights.

Give the learners a tin, a packet, a piece of string, or a container. Tell them how much it weighs full, or how long it is, or how much it can hold.

Then give them a bigger or a smaller tin, packet or container, or a shorter or longer piece of string.

Ask them to estimate the difference.

For example:

- Feel the weight of this packet. It weighs 80 grams. If this one weighs 80 grams, how much do you think this heavier/lighter packet weighs?
- See how this container holds 3 cups of water. How many cups of water do you think this smaller/bigger container will hold?
- This piece of string is 20 centimetres long. How long do you think this longer/shorter piece of string is?
- If we know that the distance from the school to the road is half a kilometre, what do you think is the distance from the school to the shop?
- If Susanna is 1 metre tall, how tall do you think I am?

Record the learners' estimates and then reveal the answers to them. Were their estimations good ones? How were they working out the problem? Did they use the correct vocabulary (longer, shorter, heavier, lighter)?

With practice, we can learn to estimate more accurately.

(3) A counting rhyme

You will need a bunch of sticks which learners can carry easily.

Teach children this rhyme about number names and number patterns. It also teaches children about rhyming words in English:

- 1, 2, How are you?
- 3, 4, Shut the door.
- 5, 6, Pick up sticks.
- 7, 8, Put them straight.
- 9, 10, Do it again.

Put the learners in five groups – each group creates a movement to go with the words they say and the numbers they count. Select different learners to lead in the counting.

(4) Magic square

A 'magic square' is a 3 x 3 grid where the numbers in each row and column add up to the same number. Here is an example – the numbers in each row and column (including the diagonals) add up to 15:

2	9	4
7	5	3
6	1	8

Make your own magic square which adds up to a different number. Do this on the chalk board, on large chart paper, or by marking the floor or the ground.

Show your square to the learners. Ask them what they notice about the numbers. Make sure they check every row and column.

To make the activity more challenging, leave one or two cells in the grid empty. Ask the learners which numbers are needed. Ask them how they got their answers.

The learners can make their own magic squares, using different numbers.

(5) Number line

A number line is a series of numbers on a long strip of paper. You can use pieces of cardboard or a long piece of wood. You can also draw a number line on the floor or ground.

You can make a number line as long or short as you want. A number line is useful for counting, adding and subtracting activities. It can also be used for measuring lengths, heights and distances.

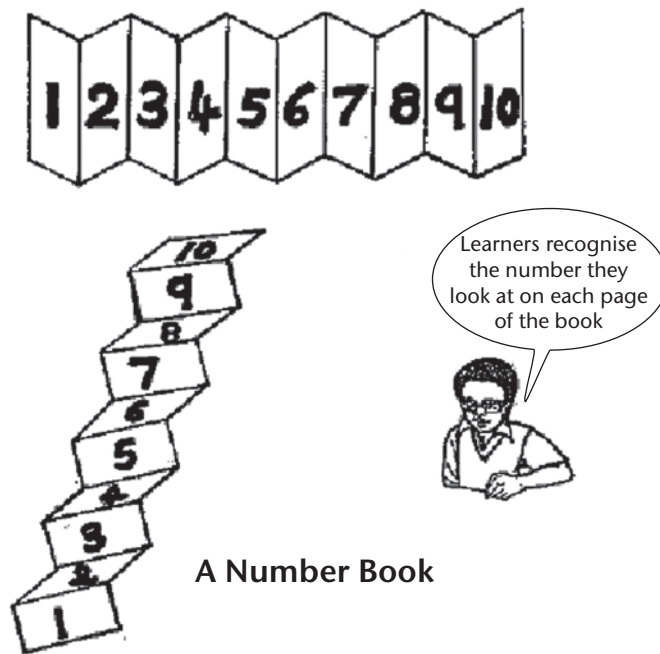
You will need:

- Paper or cardboard
- Pencil, crayon or pen
- Scissors, razor blade or a knife for cutting
- Glue or thin porridge for sticking
- String

How you make it:

1. Cut strips of paper or cardboard
2. Stick these together
3. When the strips are dry, draw a straight line along the middle of the strip
4. At the start of the line write 0
5. Write numbers starting from 1, equally spaced, along the length of the line

Hang the number line in the classroom, using string. Learners can practise counting and recognising numerals by looking at the number line.

(6) Number book

A number book is paper folded in a 'zigzag' way into the shape of a book (see the illustration). Each page has a number, and you can add pictures which match the numbers. A number book can help children to recognise numerals and to count.

You will need:

- Paper
- Magazines or newspapers
- Glue or porridge for sticking
- Pens, pencils or crayons

How you make it:

1. Cut strips of paper which are big enough to write numbers on and to draw or stick pictures on to go with the numbers
2. You can paste small pieces of paper together to make one long piece
3. Fold the strip of paper at regular points to make the pages of the book
4. Write one number on each page
5. Draw or stick pictures to go with the numbers (for example: 1 tree, 2 cows, 3 bananas, 4 cars, etc.)

Show the number book to the children so they can practise counting and recognising numbers. Children can collect paper to make their own number books.

(7) Multiplication calculator

x	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20
3	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30
4	4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40
5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
6	6	12	18	24	30	36	42	48	54	60
7	7	14	21	28	35	42	49	56	63	70
8	8	16	24	32	40	48	56	64	72	80
9	9	18	27	36	45	54	63	72	81	90
10	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

A multiplication calculator

The multiplication calculator is a number grid to help the learning of multiplication.

It uses numbers from 1 to 100, with a number in each cell of the grid (see the illustration).

You can make this with large chart paper, draw it on the chalk board, or draw it on the ground.

You will need:

- A large sheet of chart paper
- A ruler
- A pencil, pen or crayon
- Two sticks

How you make it:

1. Draw with the ruler 121 squares on the chart paper
2. Leave the top left-hand square blank
3. Write numbers 1 to 10 along the top line of squares
4. Write numbers 1 to 10 down the left-hand side of the chart
5. Then for every number on the left-hand side of the chart, write all the multiples of that number until you get to the last line of squares on the right-hand side of the chart

The answer to any multiplication sum up to 100 will be found where the two sticks meet, when one is placed vertically and the other is placed horizontally.

For example, to solve the problem: $8 \times 7 = ?$

Take a stick and place it horizontally along the line of squares where 8 marks the first square, and then place a second stick vertically along the line of squares where 7 marks the first square. The two sticks will meet at 56.

Learners can solve multiplication problems by looking at the calculator.

Acknowledgements

Artwork (pages 81 and 82): Images courtesy of the Malawi Institute of Education

Review

Mathematics and numeracy are all around us and we use our numeracy and mathematical knowledge and skills every day. We also learn mathematics and numeracy in school, and this can feel very different to how we use numbers and measurements at home and in the community. Young learners need opportunities to practise numeracy using practical resources.

Being numerate can lead to good life chances and employment. Being confident in numeracy is important so that you are not cheated in the market or at the bank. Number work and mathematics can also be fun to do. Many learners enjoy the subject and can develop confidence in it. We hope that as you studied this unit you could see both sides of numeracy learning: skill and enjoyment. We also hope that you had some fun doing the practical activity.

What do you think are the problems girls face in learning mathematics?

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How do you think these problems could be overcome?

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Discuss your thoughts with your Mentor at your next meeting

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Scholar's report and self-assessment:

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Mentor's comments and evaluation:

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Scholar's signature: Date:

Mentor's signature: Date:

Theme 3 Unit 2

Activities for literacy and language

In this unit you will continue to think about locally available resources to support children's learning. This time the focus is on Literacy – one of the most important Learning Areas of the primary school curriculum.

Think for a moment about these questions:

- Did you enjoy learning to read and write when you were a young learner?
- Do you remember how you learned to read and write?
- What did you find easy and what did you find hard?
- Were there stories you liked to listen to, or read, as a child?
- What kind of writing do you remember doing in primary school?

Literacy – the ability to read and write – is a very important life skill. Words are everywhere: on signs, on food packets and advertising, in training manuals, in magazines and newspapers, and of course in books. When you help children learn to read and write, you help them to do better in school and improve their life chances.

Literacy can also give us great pleasure and enjoyment. When you open a book, a magazine or a newspaper, you open the world! Reading and writing with children is an excellent way to help them learn about society and the world around them.

Language learning is different from literacy learning. It is about the languages a person can speak and understand, not just read and write. Many of us – especially in Africa – speak and understand more than one language, even if we cannot read or write these languages. We may use one language in school, a different language at home, and another language in the community. Some people use a language just for religious worship – Arabic in the Mosque, for example.

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

1. your understanding of literacy in everyday life
2. your knowledge of using locally available resources to support children's literacy learning
3. your skills in managing and planning your study time.

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Literacy: the ability to read and write.

Text: a piece of writing which can be long like a novel or short like a poem.

Title: the name of a text.

Author: the person who writes a text.

Illustrator: the person who makes pictures to go with the text.

Timing

You have three weeks to complete the reading and activities in this unit. Skim-read the unit now, so that you know what you need to do.

Study activity

Reading: The languages of school and society

As you read the information below, think about the literacy learning you have seen in your School Experience so far.

In primary schools in Malawi, children learn to read and write first in Chichewa and then in English.

But English is not the language children use at home, so in school they will be using two different languages. For young learners, it is helpful to start with oral work – talking and listening – to build up their vocabulary in English. Pictures and actions help learners to understand the meanings of new words. When learners understand what words mean in English and in Chichewa, they can start to read and write these words.

Reading in two languages

Learners need to understand how letters on the chalk board or in books represent particular sounds, and how these letter-sounds combine to create words. This is an important starting point with young learners.

For example, a teacher can:

- show a picture of a dog and ask the learners: ‘What do you see?’
- show the word in English (‘dog’) and in Chichewa (‘galu’)
- say the word in English and Chichewa
- look at each letter of the word in both languages, **d-o-g** and **g-a-l-u**, then point to each letter and say the sound of each letter in both languages
- look at the sound of each letter in English and Chichewa
- talk to the learners about the interesting differences. In English, the word has three letters and three sounds. In Chichewa, the word has four letters and four sounds.

To develop learners’ understanding, a teacher can:

- give examples of more words that start with the letter and sound ‘g’ in Chichewa and compare these words to the same words in English
- ask learners to think of more words starting with this letter and sound. Can you think of an example using a Chichewa word?

It is important to remember that children learn to read in different ways. Some children like to look at every letter of a word. Other children like to remember whole words, without looking at each letter.

Learning about writing

Words are combined to make sentences and paragraphs, and longer texts such as stories and novels.

In primary school, children practise writing in three ways:

1. Reading a variety of texts in order to learn about different forms of writing – for example, a cooking recipe is written differently from a poem or a story.
2. Writing their own texts – such as stories, poems, instructions, reports and lists.
3. Spelling and handwriting practice – because good spelling and neat handwriting will help others to read your writing.

In your classroom, have you seen children practising their writing in these three different ways?

Real life example: Words are everywhere

There are many learning resources for literacy which we can use at little or no cost – as these photographs show us:



When we use literacy resources from our local environment, we can show learners different forms of writing. We can show children that literacy is an important activity in our community – literacy helps us to communicate messages and news.

As you read the next two real life examples, think about:

- how literacy is a life skill and also an enjoyable activity
- how you could work with other scholars to help teachers and learners with activities like these.

Real life example: Recycling for literacy learning

Miss Rose Kimokoti teaches Standard 2 learners in Ntchisi. The children are not very familiar with English, but they know some English letters and words on food packets.

Miss Kimokoti asked her neighbours for empty boxes, packets and tins. She brought these to school to use for reading and writing activities.

Miss Kimokoti has made up a game called 'Word Detective'. She organises the learners into groups and gives each group a box, a packet or a tin. She writes these questions on the chalkboard:

1. What is in this tin / packet / box? How do you know this?
2. Which words are in the biggest letters? Why do you think these words are in the biggest letters?
3. How many words begin with capital letters? Why is this?
4. Which words are written more than one time on the packaging? Which word is used the most?
5. What is the weight of this product (grams/kilograms)?

The 'winner' is the group that finishes first with the correct answers.

Miss Kimokoti says that when learners can read English letters and words on packaging, they can find these same letters and words in other texts such as stories. She says:

Children learn a lot from doing literacy with the food packets.

Beginner readers use the words on the packets to gain confidence and skill in recognising the shape of upper and lower case (capital and small) letters of the alphabet and in linking the letters to sounds. They can also look for punctuation signs on the packets.

I also use the food packets to make reading cards with letters and words.

By copying letters and words from the packets, beginner writers gain confidence and skill in writing these letters and words accurately.

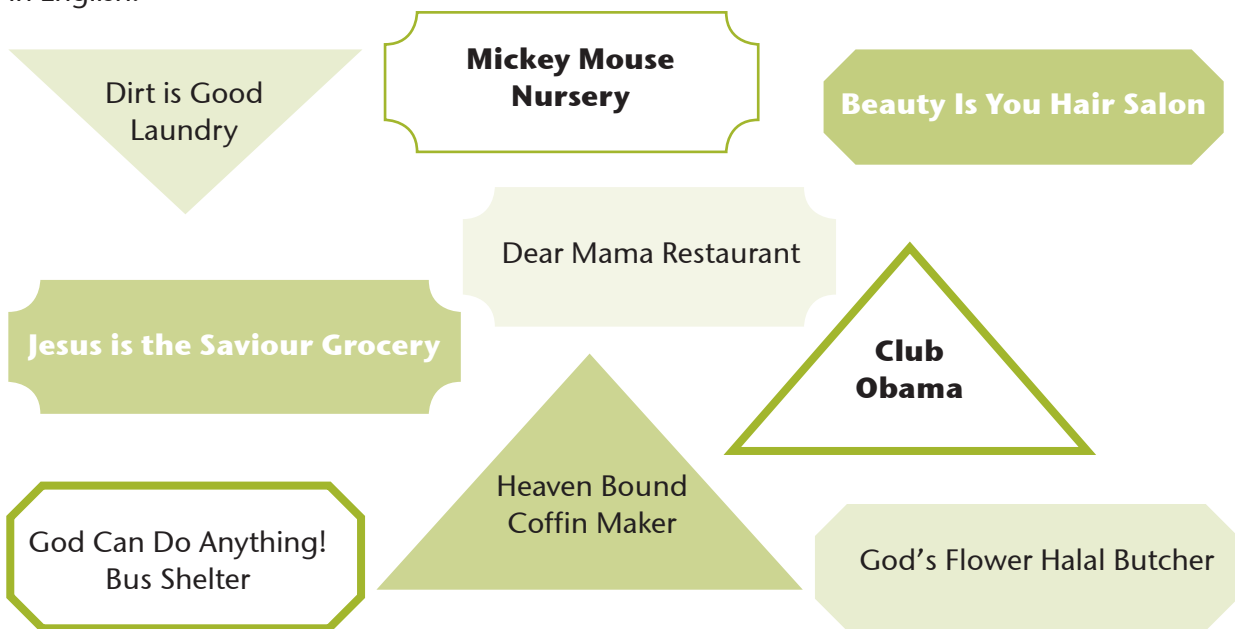
More advanced readers like to look at the advertising and to think about what these messages are saying.

Real life example: A community reading walk

Mr Ngalande in Mwanza wanted his learners in Standard 3 to notice the writing in their local environment. He decided to take the learners for a walk in the town. He had a very large class, so he asked two Scholars and some adults from the community to help him. He met with Mrs Maliya, Mrs Mphatso, Mrs Ndaba and Mrs Bowa. He explained what he wanted to do. The ladies and the Scholars made some suggestions to him about where to go in the town.

One morning, the teacher and the four ladies planned a walk through Mwanza with the Standard 3 learners.

On the walk, they saw these signs – some were in Chichewa and some were in English:



The signs had artwork and colourful designs which made the messages very lively.

On the walk, they also saw signs for:

- a school
- a clinic
- traffic STOP sign
- a furniture maker
- mobile telephone advertising
- local elections
- a football match.

On the walk, the adults and learners stopped to look at each sign. The adults asked the learners these questions:

1. What does this sign tell us?
2. Why do you think it has been put here?
3. What language is this sign written in? Why do you think it is written in this language?
4. What information do you get from the drawings or photographs that go with the writing?
5. Is there punctuation in the sign? Are there capital letters?
6. Is this sign easy or hard to read? Why is this?
7. Do you like this sign? Why or why not?
8. Do you think this sign could be improved? How could you do this?

When they returned to the classroom, Mr Ngalande had the learners draw their favourite signs. Mrs Maliya, Mrs Mphatso, Mrs Ndaba and Mrs Bowa and the Scholars stayed in the classroom to talk with the learners about what they had seen on the walk. Mr Ngalande thanked the four ladies and the Scholars for their help. He says:

This activity showed learners that there is lots of reading and writing which is naturally all around us. The activity gave learners opportunities to practise their reading. They also learned that there are employment opportunities for people who can read and write well and creatively.

I'm going to get recycled materials so that the learners can create and write their own signs, advertisements and posters. I'm also going to make sure that the class writes a 'Thank you' letter to Mrs Maliya, Mrs Mphatso, Mrs Ndaba and Mrs Bowa. I was very lucky to have the help of the four ladies from the community – and I did not think of visiting the Hair Salon without their suggestion!

Practical activity

Choose ONE of the activities to do during these three study weeks.

You can share this activity with other Scholars, and do it together.

Each activity involves making a classroom resource for literacy or doing an activity to support literacy learning.

Read through the activities and think about which one you could do.

Talk to your teacher and your Mentor about your ideas.

If you can, try out the activity or the resource with learners.

When you choose, think about the learners you help and also about your own literacy study and learning needs.

(1) Tell a story

Choose a story which you know well. It could be one of your favourite stories or a traditional story from when you were a child. Make sure it is not too long. Practise telling the story at home. Make time during the school week to tell the story to a small group of learners.

Before you tell the story, ask the learners a few questions such as:

- Do you know this story?
- If I say the first words, or say to you the title of the story – what do you think it will be about?

You can use an object to help you tell the story – this could be a drum, a cloth, a gourd, a cup or a bowl – depending on what happens in the story.

You can tell the story using actions, clapping, gestures and singing.

Stop to ask questions and get learners' comments. You can stop at a dramatic moment and ask: what do you think will happen next?

When you finish telling the story, ask the learners some questions, such as:

- What was the best part of the story? Why?
- Was anything interesting (funny, sad, or scary) in the story? What was it?
- Has anything like this ever happened to you? Please tell us.
- If you could change a part of the story, what would it be? Why?
- If you were one of the characters, how would you feel? Why?

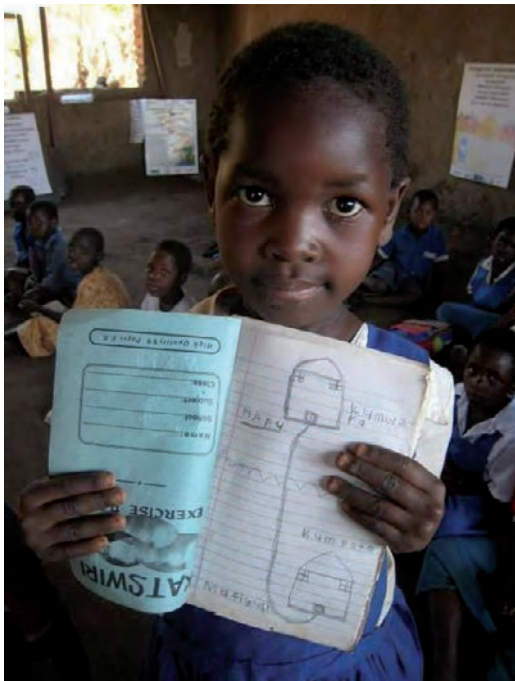
Encourage all the learners to participate.

After telling the story, children could draw pictures of their favourite part, or tell the story in their own words.

(2) Make books

Writing stories and creating books is a wonderful way for children to practise their literacy skills. Creating books is fun and motivates children to read and write more. Learners love to see their ideas and drawings made into a book. When learners make books about their own lives and experiences, they can discover that writing is a good way to express themselves.

There are different ways to make your own books. See the practical activity in Unit 1 (Activities for numeracy and mathematics) for making a number 'zigzag' book. You can use any available paper. See the photographs for two examples of how to make books.



Children can make individual books, or make a big book in the group, with each learner writing and illustrating one or two pages.

Materials:

- paper
- pens
- crayons
- glue for sticking if necessary.

Tell learners that they are going to create a book. Display some books if you have them. Demonstrate how to hold a book properly. Point to the titles of the books, and point to the authors of the books. Explain these words to the learners:

- **Title:** the name of the book.
- **Author:** the person who wrote the book.
- **Illustrator:** the person who did the pictures in the book.

Select a title for your book, for example, 'My Family', 'My School' or 'My Vocabulary Book'. Ask the children, "What is the title of our book?" Write the title on the chalkboard or on chart paper so that children can write their own title pages.

Ask the learners, "Who is the author of the book?" Children will write their own names on their individual books – or, if the children are making a book as a group, they will write all their names on the title page.

Give each child, or the group, the folded paper. For a group book, make sure that each learner has at least one page to write and illustrate.

Have each child write one or two sentences for their page, and add a picture to go with their writing.

Number the pages.

Let the children read each other's books. Praise them for their wonderful work creating books together.

(3) Make a display of different kinds of writing

Displays of pictures, writing, and drawings are stimulating for learners. As you saw in the real life examples, reading and writing are part of everyday life.

Collect writing from your local environment that is part of day-to-day life, such as:

- labels
- signs
- newspapers
- magazines
- children's writing and drawing
- alphabet charts
- word lists
- advertising
- old calendars
- food packets
- posters.

Display the collection on the classroom walls or hanging from string.

Ask children to help collect everyday examples of writing.

You can create a theme for your display. For example, if the theme is 'My Family', the display should contain words such as mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, etc., and it should include pictures and stories about families. If the theme is 'Agriculture', it should contain words such as farm, crops, harvest, grain, etc.

See the photograph for examples of displays in a classroom.



(4) Recycling for literacy learning

Ask your teacher for permission to work with a group of learners. Carry out this activity in the same way that Miss Rose Kimokoti did in Real life example: Recycling for literacy learning.

- Bring in enough tins, packets or boxes so that each learner in the group has an item to work with.
- Write some or all of the five questions from Real life example: "Recycling for literacy learning" on the chalkboard or on chart paper.
- Ask the learners to read the questions – or you can read the questions to the learners.
- Play the 'Word Detective' game.

You should review Real life example: "Recycling for literacy learning" to help you plan this activity.

(5) A community reading walk

With your teacher and Head teacher's permission, take a small group of learners for a walk in your local area to look for writing. Carry out the walk in the same way that Mr Ngalande in Mwanza did, in Real life example: "A community reading walk". If you can, invite a mother, sister or aunt from the community to help you. If you invite other adults on the walk, explain to them the purpose of the activity and what you would like the learners to focus on.

You should review Real life example: "A community reading walk" to help you plan this activity.

(6) A Chichewa – English vocabulary chart with pictures

A vocabulary chart has words written on it for reading practice, with pictures to match the words. These can be your own drawings, or pictures from calendars or magazines. For example:

Chichewa	English
dzanja	arm
mpunga	rice
mtsikana	girl
mnyamata	boy
madzi	water
mbalame	bird
tsatsa	a stick for beating a drum / advertising
tsaya	cheek

You can choose words to match the knowledge of the learners. Find newspaper or magazine pictures for each word, or draw your own pictures. You can also ask learners to draw a picture for each word.

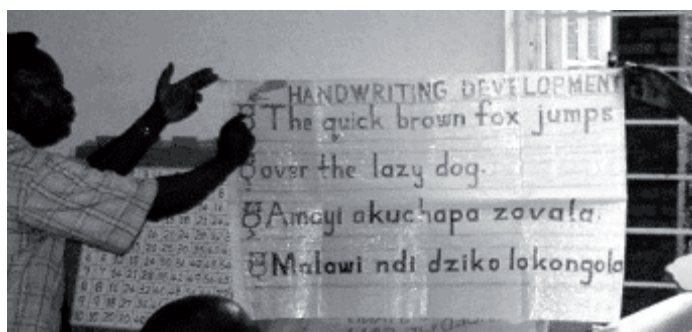
Materials:

- chart paper or cardboard
- pencils, crayons or pens
- old newspapers, calendars or magazines
- thin maize porridge for sticking.

What to do:

1. Select and write words on the chart paper or cardboard.
2. Cut out and paste pictures on the chart paper to go with the words. You can use real objects if they are small – for example, leaves, seeds, or cloth.
3. Display the chart on the wall of the classroom so that learners can practise their reading and their spelling.

(7) Make a reading passage



The photo shows an example of chart paper with a short passage for reading. You can make a reading passage by copying text from other

books, or you can create your own text. This can help to make additional reading for children when there are not many reading books.

In the reading passage, you can include vocabulary that matches the knowledge of the learners. You can also draw or paste pictures to go with the reading.

Do you remember the funny little story about *Jumpy the Germ* in Theme 2 Unit 2 (The Rights of the Child)? This is an example of a reading passage.

Review

Literacy – the ability to read and write – is a very important life skill. It is important to understand what we read so that we know our rights, and so that we can read important messages and news about the world around us. It is important to be able to write so that others can know our thoughts and beliefs. Literacy learning can also be enjoyable. We hope that as you studied this unit you could see both sides of literacy learning: skill and enjoyment.

Language learning is different from literacy learning. It is about the languages we can speak and understand. It is about where and when we use these languages – in school, at home, in the community or for worship. People can have a lot of knowledge about languages even if they are not literate (able to read and write).

There are many resources for reading and writing in our local community, on signs, food packets, tins, boxes, newspapers and magazines. Other literacy resources are people themselves: storytellers, elders, and others who can support children as they learn to read and write. We hope you had some fun doing your practical activity in this unit.

To finish this unit, take some moments to think about the standard of English you need for success in passing the MSCE.

How is your English reading and writing for MSCE the same as the literacy that primary school children learn?

How is it different?

What do you think you need to know, and do, so that one day you can teach primary school children about Chichewa and English literacy? Write your thoughts about this, in the space below:

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Scholar's report and self-assessment:

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Mentor's comments and evaluation:

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Scholar's signature: Date:

Mentor's signature: Date:

Theme 3 Unit 3

Reflecting on learning and progress

You have arrived at the final weeks of your first year of School Experience. You might feel like you are in the middle of a long journey – a journey with challenges and, we hope, with many successes. You might also feel like you are at the beginning of a new journey, because you are probably thinking about what you will do next year when you are a Teaching Assistant in Standard 7 and/or Standard 8.

Your School Experience is important to you and your future. You have now gained real-life work experience of supporting children's learning in a primary school. As you helped and worked in the primary school, you have also been a learner. You have studied the primary school Learning Areas as well as important issues such as child friendly schools. You have made resources and carried out activities to support children's learning especially the learning of girls. You have worked alongside a teacher. All this makes you a strong candidate for future work in a school, for teacher training college or other employment in the future

Your work experience in the primary school has been important to children and to your community. In Malawi, especially in rural areas, girls do not get as much education as boys. Girls drop out of school for many reasons, as you will know from your own experiences. The United Nations and UNESCO have looked at this situation. These international organisations report that girls are more likely to stay in education when they can go to schools located close to their villages, and where there are women teachers and women working in the school (Rose, 2003). So, as a Scholar, you are playing an important part in improving the educational chances for girls. As a role model in the school, you encourage girls to stay in school.

We hope you appreciate the important learning and work you have done since you first started as a Scholar. Congratulations and well done – there is now just a little bit more work to do.

In this unit you will look back on your experiences in the primary school and think about the progress you have made. You will write about what you have done and learned. You will also look to your second year of School Experience with older learners.

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

1. understanding of what you have learned from your first year of School Experience
2. knowledge of how to organise evidence of your learning
3. skills in presenting evidence of your learning and experience to others
4. your writing skills.

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Evidence: proof or examples.

Feedback: asking for suggestions or ideas from another person.

Draft: the first time you try to write something down – writing which will need improvement.

Timing

This unit will take two weeks for you to complete. You will continue to help as usual in the primary school, but we have not given you any activities to do with children. This is a time for *you* – a time to gather your thoughts and evidence about your learning. It is also a time to talk about your experiences and progress with others such as your Mentor, your Head teacher, your MSCE Tutors, other Scholars, and your family.

First you will review your School Experience and make notes to answer questions about what you have learned. The writing you do in this week will be for yourself. It is draft writing to help you prepare for a formal piece of writing called the Personal Statement.

Later you will draft and write your Personal Statement. This will be formal writing for others to read. You can use this writing to help your application for teacher training college or for other employment.



Study activity

Real life examples

Let's make a final visit to the three Scholars you read about in Theme 1: Grace, Towela and Joyce.

What can they tell us about what they have done and learned? What are their goals for the future? What is their advice to new Scholars?

Grace

What I learned from my School Experience is that children can learn in different ways. Some children like to read, some like to make things with their hands, other children like to talk, or sing, or draw, or write. In a large classroom it is hard to support individual learners, but it is important to keep in mind that children are different.

I feel I have been most helpful to the learners who find things difficult in school. For example, I helped a girl who was not confident in number work. I encouraged her to draw on the floor with a stick to work out number problems. When she could see her marks and drawings, she understood how to solve the number problems. I have another example: there was a child who liked to make little books of her own writing and pictures, so I would collect paper for her to make books and we would read these books to other children.

My goal for the future is to apply for teacher training college. My School Experience has helped me to understand what makes a good teacher: you must be clever, calm and creative. You must be disciplined but you must also enjoy being with children.

My advice to anyone working in a school is to be punctual. This is important for children and teachers – but it is also important for yourself, as you try to be a more professional person.

Towela

What did I learn from my School Experience? That my own knowledge about Learning Areas – such as English, mathematics and science – is very important. The more I learned for myself, the more I was able to help children's learning. The more I learned for myself, the more I was able to answer children's questions and explain things to them. For example: a child asked me, 'Why does the rain water in the puddle disappear in the afternoon – where does it go?' I was able to answer her question by explaining the process of evaporation.

My goals for the future are to re-sit MSCE mathematics and physical science, and then to apply for teacher training college. I need to be more confident about mathematics, which is a difficult subject for me. It is good for children to see that adults can be learners too – and that learning is important for people of all ages.

My advice to anyone helping in a school is to collect recyclable materials whenever you can – paper, tins, packets, plastic – and save these to use in school. Then you are always ready to make a display or an activity with children.

Joyce

I have been able to learn from observing and talking with others. I have developed confidence when I talk – to the teacher, my Mentor, my MSCE Tutors, the Head teacher and parents of children. I used to be very shy about talking – especially to men in authority. But now I can ask questions and say what I think. I am not afraid to speak out.

In my village school I am a strong role model for children, especially girls. I encourage all children to come to school and to continue their education. I can talk to mothers and fathers about this. If I see that a child has not come to school, I can go and talk to the parents about what is happening – sometimes a teacher does not have the time to do this. For example, I noticed that a girl did not come to school for many days. I went to the girl’s home and found out that her mother had died. The father wanted the girl to stay at home but I persuaded him of the importance of sending her to school – also, I now know that it is the law that young children must attend school.

My goal is to continue to help children at the primary school in my village. I cannot apply for teacher training college because it is too far away and I have too many responsibilities at home. But I can see that I have an important part to play in the school. Maybe I will be able to apply to teacher training college when my brothers and sisters grow up.

My advice to anyone helping in a school is do not be shy. If something is working well, or not working well, speak up and say what is happening – good or bad. It is always useful to ask questions and learn from others who have more experience than us.

Practical activity

In this activity, you will be gathering and organising evidence of your learning. This is personal writing, and you might write about your feelings.

You will first use the notes from this activity to write your Personal Statement.

1. Go to Theme 1 Unit 5, ‘Helping in the Classroom’. Look at the list of things you can do in the classroom, in the ‘Practical activity’. Write short answers to the questions below.

Which of these activities have you done during your School Experience?

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Are there other things you have done? What are these other things?

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Are there things you did a little, which you would like to do more?

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Are there things you would like to do, but have not done at all?

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- 2. Think in particular now about how you have helped girls in the classroom or the school. Make a list of things you have done that you think have been especially good for girl learners. The list can include things you did in the classroom during lessons, and examples of your behaviour as a role model who encourages girls to stay in school

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- 3. Now you will answer the questions that we asked Grace, Towela and Joyce. Write short answers in the spaces below.

What is the most important thing you learned from your first year of School Experience?

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Give an example of how you used this learning, with a girl or group of girls in the classroom or school

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What are your goals for next year?

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What is your advice to new Scholars?

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Now you will use the notes you wrote about your goals in Theme 2 Unit 4 to begin to write a Personal Statement.

Think about the following things that you revised in this unit:

- who will read your writing
- talking to someone before writing things down on paper
- headings and organising information
- evidence.

We have provided a list of things you should try to write about. Try to put in details, and real examples and evidence from your experiences in the school.

Before you write about these things, try to talk aloud to someone in school or at home about them. It is always helpful, before writing, to talk aloud about your ideas to someone else.

Imagine, as you talk and then as you write, that you are speaking formally to someone – maybe to an interviewer in a teacher training college.

Write about the topics below, in a notebook or on recycled paper.

Your responsibilities as a Teaching Assistant:

- jobs you did in the school
- how you helped the teacher
- activities you did with children
- how you helped girls
- learning resources you made
- things you did a little and would like to do more
- things you would like to do but have not done at all.

Your School Experience studies:

- the most interesting study unit and why it was interesting
- the most difficult unit and why it was difficult
- an activity or a resource that went well and why it went well
- a difficult situation in school that you overcame.

What you learned – your knowledge, skills and understanding:

- what you learned about yourself from your School Experience
- what you learned about children
- some examples of how you helped a child or children.

(Remember the importance of not using children's real names – as you did in your child study in Theme 2 Unit 3.)

Your goals:

- what you want to do next year
- why you want to do this
- how your School Experience has helped you to be ready for this
- what knowledge and skills you have gained.

Save your draft writing so that others can read it.

Your draft Personal Statement will become writing for others to read – your Mentor, your Head teacher, and possibly a teacher training college admissions officer or an employer. This final writing – your Personal Statement – is writing which presents you at your best. There is a space after this page for you to write your notes and drafts towards your personal statement. The special form for your final personal statement which will need to be signed by the Head teacher at your placement school is at the end of this School Experience Year 1 Handbook.

First, show your draft Personal Statement to your Mentor. Ask her or him to read it and give you feedback on what you have written.

You can also show your writing (or read it aloud) to other people – such as your MSCE Tutors, another Scholar, or someone at home – and ask them for feedback as well. They might ask a question or make a comment that helps you to improve your writing. Sometimes, other people will remember something that you have forgotten to write about.

You can add the feedback to your draft.

Review

You should now review and re-write your draft Personal Statement to improve it. Make sure you are presenting yourself at your best. Look carefully at your spelling and punctuation. You might want to ask your MSCE Tutors to help you. Read your Personal Statement aloud, to make sure that what you have written makes sense.

When you are finished, ask the school Head teacher to sign your Personal Statement.

To finish this unit, it is time to say ‘Goodbye’ to your primary school until next year. Make time to thank everyone who has helped you: the Head teacher, your Mentor, the class teacher and, of course, the children.

We hope you will say ‘Well done’ to yourself, and celebrate your achievements so far. We wish you every success in the future.

References

Rose, P. (2003) ‘Communities, gender and education: evidence from sub-Saharan Africa’, Background paper for *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2003/4 Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality*, Paris, UNESCO.

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Forum for African Women
Educationalists in Malawi
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*"Supporting Girls and Women to
Acquire Education for
Development"*



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Keeping Girls in School scholarship programme
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