

School experience

Theme 2: Children's learning

Mentor handbook



The Open
University



Keeping Girls in School scholarship programme
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'Keeping Girls in School' Scholarship Programme

School Experience Year 1

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Mentor's Introduction to Theme 2: Children learning

In Theme 2 of School Experience Year 1, the Scholars look at how children learn. In the next five units the Scholars will continue to help in the classroom and support teaching and learning in the primary school. They will explore the rights of the child, as well as the importance of teacher professionalism in the school.

Theme 2 Unit 1: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's 'Child-Friendly Schools'

In Unit 1 'Child-Friendly Schools', Scholars will start by reading from a book about child-friendly schools, by UNICEF. UNICEF is the world organisation protecting the rights of children and young people. It is important to know that Malawi follows national and international laws which protect children so that they can have a good education. Some of the language used in this unit might be difficult for some Scholars, so you should be prepared to help them to understand the readings in the unit.

This unit explores what makes schools safe learning places for learners, specifically girls. Some of the Scholars might have had difficult experiences in school previously. As a Mentor, you should ensure you treat the information from Scholars confidentially and are available to support them or to be able to identify others who could support her if required.

In this unit the Scholar is asked to look at the school where she is and think whether it is a safe, protective and health-promoting school. The Scholar might be concerned about criticizing the school where she is a Teaching Assistant. In your role as Mentor you should ensure she understands that she is not asked to criticize the school, but to think whether it could be safer or more protective towards girls mainly.

Theme 2 Unit 1

Child-friendly schools

Welcome to Theme 2. In the next five School Experience units you will continue to help in the classroom and support teaching and learning in the primary school. The title of this theme is 'Children Learning'. You will start by reading from a book about child-friendly schools, by UNICEF. UNICEF is the world organisation protecting the rights of children and young people. It is important to know that Malawi follows national and international laws which protect children so that they can have a good education.

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

1. your understanding of what makes a school safe for learners
2. your knowledge of international agreements protecting children.

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Warm: in this unit, the word does not mean how hot the school is – a 'warm' school is a friendly school where children and adults feel happy and safe.

Protective: keeping girls and boys safe from violence.

Health-promoting: encouraging and teaching children how to stay clean and healthy, and making sure the school is clean and safe.

Timing

Four hours each week at different times during the two weeks. Make time to understand the reading, to look carefully around your school and to do the writing.

Study activity

Preparation reading

1. Read carefully and slowly this definition of a good school, which comes from the UNICEF book *Child-Friendly Schools*:

A child-friendly school is safe and protective of children. It creates safe spaces and a healthy environment for girls and boys to effectively learn. It also includes school-based health and nutrition programmes and safe sanitation facilities. A school should be a welcoming and safe place that girls and boys would always want to come back to, every day.

The responsibility of making a school a safe and healthy place is the responsibility of everyone. If everyone takes their part in making their school safe, protective and health-promoting, the school will be a warm and welcoming environment, where every child would want to go.

2. Now read an example, which is also from the UNICEF book.

At Nohawa F.P. School, there are adequate latrines for boys and girls which are 10 metres apart and both are 200 metres away from the classrooms. The school has one rubbish pit which is full and is overflowing. The school has an enrolment of 1440 pupils. The school is a full primary and yet it has only four classrooms. The school has a bore-hole which is not functioning.

One day Mr. Mvahiwa, the headteacher beat up one girl pupil to the point of fainting for not bringing a bundle of grass for constructing fences for teachers' houses. The pupil was later hospitalised at a health centre nearby for sustaining injury, but was not given first aid. The girl has since dropped out of school. However, the school encourages parents to give their children some food to eat at school.

3. Using the information from these readings, write your answers to the following questions:

(a) Do you think Nohawa F.P School is a safe, protective and health-promoting school? Give reasons for your answer.

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(b) What does the school do which is **not** safe, protective and health-promoting?

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- (c) What does the school do which is safe, protective and health-promoting?

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It is important to draw lessons from this school – even if your school is very different from this one. As a Teaching Assistant you have an important role in making your school safe, protective and health-promoting.

Practical activity

1. Go around your school, and look carefully – inside and outside. What do you see which makes the school safe, protective and health-promoting? Here is what Tawonga, a Scholar in Mwanza, wrote about the primary school where she is a Teaching assistant:

My school is protective of children because the teacher does not use physical punishment. My school is health-promoting because we teach children how to wash their hands. The school is safe because there is enough space for children to sit in the classroom.

How could your school be better? This is what Tawonga wrote about her school:

But the school could be more protective if girls could travel to their homes safely.

2. Complete these sentences, about your own school. You will have different things to write than Tawonga, because you are in a different school:

My school is safe for children because ...

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My school is protective of children because ...

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My school is health-promoting because ...

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3. Now think about how your school could improve and do better for children. When you do this, you are not being critical of the school in a bad way. Thinking about how we can improve is an important part of learning. Complete this sentence:

My school could be more safe, protective and health-promoting for children, and especially for girls, if ...

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Review

Children learn better when they are healthy, safe and happy. Good health and nutrition increase school enrolment and reduce absence. Children's learning depends on their safety and protection from all forms of danger in the school. A safe and healthy school can help children to be successful learners.

Violence against girls is one of the biggest reasons why they do not attend school. For example, a lack of separate latrines for girls and boys is embarrassing, and it forces girls into situations of sexual harassment. Long distances between home and school also put girls at risk.

To finish this unit, think about what you do to help make your placement school warm and welcoming for children and especially for girls. Perhaps you greet and help learners in a friendly way, or you speak with teachers and parents respectfully and politely. Perhaps you have made sure a girl was safe, or encouraged a girl to talk about a problem. Think about how your school could be a better place for all learners – even if you cannot change it.

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:

Mentor's comments and evaluation

Your own reflection as a Mentor on what you have learned through mentoring the Scholar through this unit

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Mentor's signature: Date:

Head Teacher's signature: Date:

Theme 2 Unit 2: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's 'Rights of the Child'

In Unit 1 Scholars learned about how children need to feel safe, healthy and protected in order to be successful learners, and they learned about the UNICEF book '*Child-friendly schools*'. In Unit 2 Scholars will learn about the Rights of the Child as defined by the important world organisation the United Nations. For the practical activity, they will look at a story which some children wrote themselves about staying healthy.

In this unit some Scholars might require your help to understand the different rights of the child and how these could affect them or the children in the school, their community and families.

In your next meeting with the Scholars you might want to explore their understanding of the rights of the children, and the link between the two readings in this unit.

Theme 2 Unit 2

Rights of the child

In Unit 1 you learned about how children need to feel safe, healthy and protected in order to be successful learners, and you learned about the UNICEF book *Child-Friendly Schools*. In Unit 2 you will learn about the Rights of the Child as defined by the important world organisation the United Nations. For the practical activity, you will look at a story which some children wrote themselves about staying healthy.

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

1. your knowledge of international agreements on children's rights
2. knowledge of teaching resources which support children's health and safety.

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Engagement: catching a child's imagination and interest, making a child enthusiastic and motivated about learning.

Rights: something which people have by law, tradition or nature – that which is good and proper which everyone should have.

Discrimination: to disrespect a group of people and treat them badly because of their colour, their gender, their nation or their language.

Timing

Four hours each week during the two weeks. You should do the reading for this unit at different times, depending on what you are doing to help in the classroom.

Study activity _____

Preparation reading

1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was agreed in 2000. Malawi was one of the 194 nations that agreed to these rights. Read them carefully and slowly. If you are not sure of the meaning of some of the words, ask a teacher or your Mentor to explain. As you read, think about whether you agree or disagree with these ideas:

Survival Rights

Children have the right to be with their family or those who care for them

Children have the right to enough food, clean water and health care

Children have the right to an adequate standard of living

Protection Rights

- Children have the right to be protected from discrimination
- Children have the right to protection from exploitation and abuse
- Children have the right to special protection in wars

Development Rights

- Children have the right to education
- Children have the right to be protected from work that could damage their education, health or development
- Disabled children have the right to special care and training
- Children have the right to play

Participation Rights

- Children have the right to take part in decisions affecting their lives
- Children have the right to know what their rights are
- Children have the right to a nationality

2. Try to answer these questions in your mind – you do not need to write anything down:

Are there some of these rights which you think are especially important to children in Malawi?

Do you believe these rights are always available to the children you know?

What kinds of situations take away these rights?

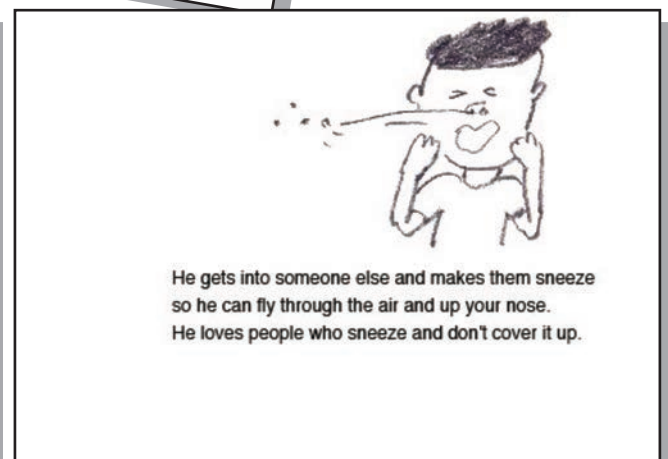
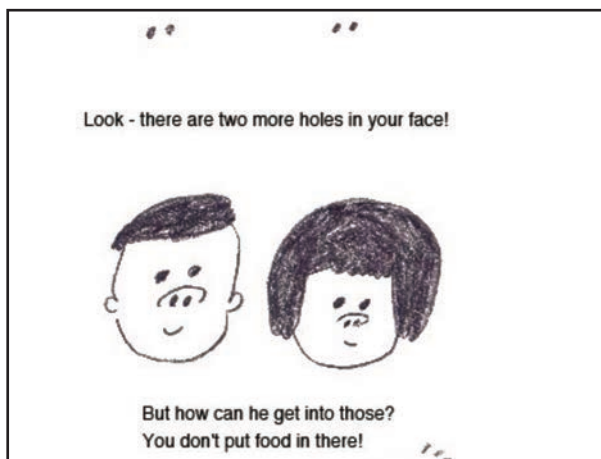
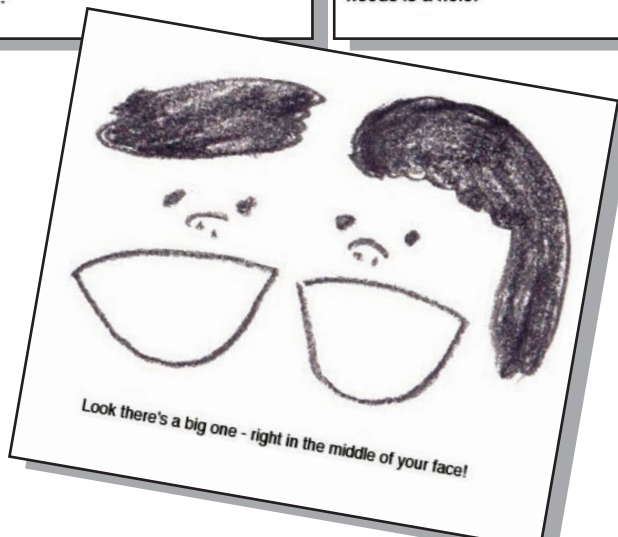
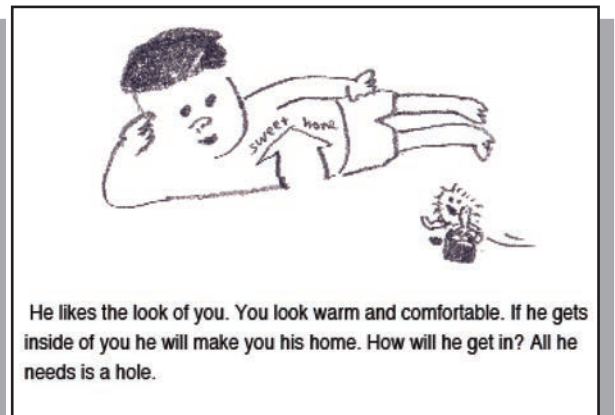
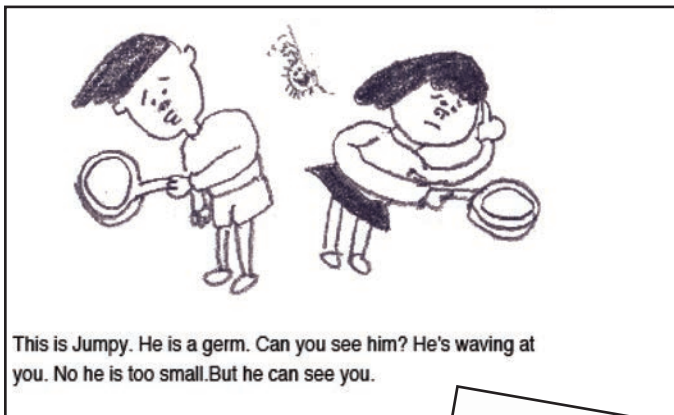
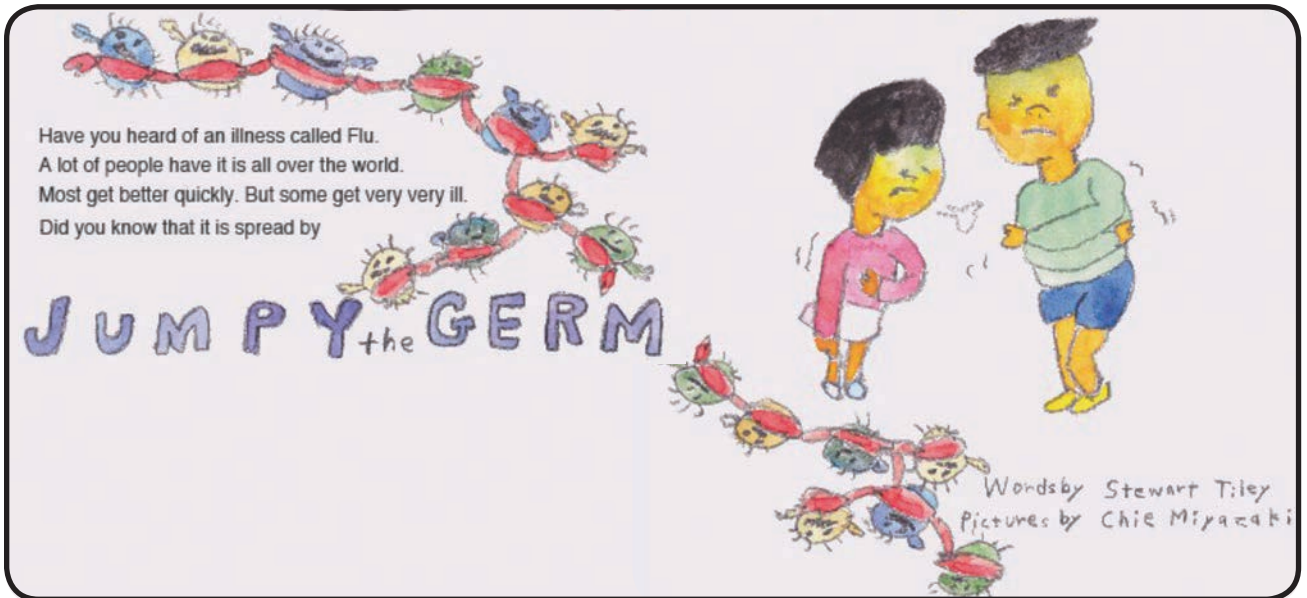
Practical activity

Read the story *Jumpy the Germ*. This was written by children.

It's a funny story which gives a serious health message about how sickness and diseases are spread from person to person, and how we can stop sickness and diseases from spreading.

After you read the story, answer these questions in your mind – you do not need to write anything down:

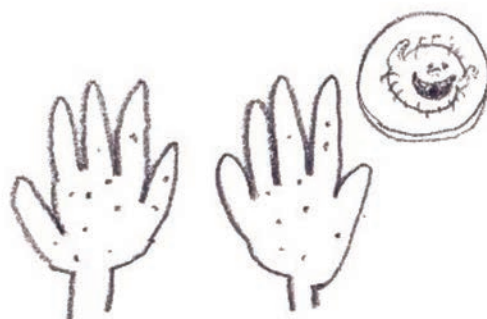
- What do you think young children can learn from this funny little story?
- Do you think children would enjoy it?
- Do you think you could tell this story to learners in your school?
- Do you think you could make a story like this, with children?
- What do you think this funny little story has to do with the United Nations Rights of the Child?



And when he's inside he'll have a party, because he doesn't like to be alone. One Jumpy will become 2 Jumpsies. 2 Jumpsies will become 4 Jumpsies. 4 will become 8 ... until there are millions of Jumpsies inside of you - all doing the same thing. All making poison.

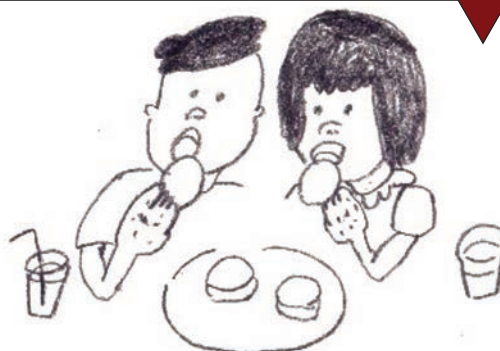


All playing with your body and making it go wrong. All making you sick and ill. He won't care how sick he makes you, or your family, or your friends. The sicker the better.



But how is he going to get up there?

It's very easy. Jumpy is sticky. He grows on the dirt and when you touch that he sticks to your hand and waits for you to put it near your mouth.



When you put food in your mouth he sticks to that and gets inside. Jumpy just loves people who don't wash their hands.



You have done them all
Good, good, good
Lets look for Jumpy again.



No one can see him, and he is not waving at you. He is dead.

Review

In this unit you read about the United Nations Rights of the Child and you looked at a story written and drawn by children. The first reading came from an important international organisation. The second reading was made by two primary school children. Can you see the connection between these two readings? The little story is engaging and funny, but it is also about the serious rights of all children to be healthy and well educated. As a Teaching Assistant, when you support children's education and health you are doing an important job which is recognised around the world.

Acknowledgements

Jumpy the Germ:

Tiley, S. (Author), Miyazaki, C. (Illus), *Jumpy the Germ*, September 2010. Published with permission from the Child-to-Child Trust; www.child-to-child.org, London, UK.

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:

Mentor's comments and evaluation

Your own reflection as a Mentor on what you have learned through mentoring the Scholar through this unit

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Mentor's signature: Date:

Head Teacher's signature: Date:

Theme 2 Unit 3: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's 'Child Study'

In this unit of Theme 2, Scholars will do another child study. It will be similar to the first child study they did in Theme 1 Unit 4 (Getting to know the learners). But now Scholars can think about all they have read and learned about so far in their first year of School Experience – especially their readings about child-friendly schools and the rights of children.

As a Teaching Assistant, they have an important opportunity to support individual children – especially the slower learners, so that they can keep up with the rest of the class. Scholars also have opportunities to support girls, so that they can participate in lessons.

As a Mentor it would be useful if you can discuss with the Scholars the importance of confidentiality when writing about specific learners, as they are asked to do this in Unit 3.

The Scholar might need your help to decide on which girl to observe in the lessons. Once she has decided on this, she might want to speak with you about what is the best way to observe her and to make notes that she can use later in her reflection in the handbook.

At your meeting with the Scholar, you could discuss what she has found easy or difficult when doing the child study. Reflect together on aspects where she could have asked you (or the class teacher) for help before her observation, and aspects she could have worked on herself while she was preparing to observe the learner.

Theme 2 Unit 3

Child study

In this unit of Theme 2, you will do another child study. It will be similar to the first child study you did in Theme 1 Unit 4 ('Getting to know the learners'). But now you can think about all you have read and learned about so far in your School Experience – especially your readings about child-friendly schools and the rights of children. As a Teaching Assistant you have an important opportunity to support individual children – especially the slower learners, so that they can keep up with the rest of the class. You also have opportunities to support girls, so that they can participate in lessons.

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

1. understanding of support for individual learners
2. understanding of support for girls in the class.

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Review: to look again at something you have read, written or done.

Update: to change and improve something you have written or done.

Timing

Four hours each week during the two weeks. You need to make time to observe a child in at least three lessons (30–35 minutes each).

Study activity

Preparation reading

In this unit you will do another child study, as you did in Theme 1 Unit 4 ('Getting to know the learners'). This time, you will focus your attention on a child in classroom lessons.

It is important to remember that each learner is an individual. Each child brings into the classroom their home life and family experiences, which affect their potential for learning in school.

Real life example

Mazosi is 10 years old. She is the youngest of seven children and lives in Dedza. Her father died in a road accident when she was six years old. Mazosi's mother struggled to find work to provide for her family. She sewed sacks, which she sold to traders who used them as bags for transporting maize. But her earnings hardly paid the rent, and there was not enough money to pay for food. Her older sons were withdrawn from secondary school to work on farms so that they can get food items and earn some money to contribute to their mother's income. None of the older children has completed secondary education.

Mazosi is a clever girl who enjoys school, but her mother is not able to guarantee that she will go to secondary school because of their difficult financial situation. Lately, Mazosi has started not coming to school regularly, and she talks about finding work to help her mother. She does not pay attention in lessons as much as she used to, and sometimes says she feels like giving up because she will not be able to carry on in school. Her school work is not as good as it was.

What would you say to Mazosi to encourage her to keep up her school work? In the space below write one or two sentences:

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Are there practical things you could do in the classroom which could help her? In the space below write two things you might do:

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Practical activity

Arrange to observe one girl in lessons this week. Carefully watch this individual learner. In the space below, write your answers based on what you have seen and heard:

1. Is the learner ready for lessons? How can you tell? Is she on time, well fed, awake, with books ready?

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2. Does the learner show interest in the lessons? How can you tell? Does she watch the teacher, listen, respond to the teacher, and know what to do in lessons?

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3. Is the learner able to understand the lessons? How can you tell this?
Does she work quickly or slowly?

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4. What were the subjects of each of the lessons? Does the child do better
in one subject than another? What do you think are the reasons for
these differences?

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5. Would the child benefit from additional help – from another child or
from an adult like yourself? What kind of help would be good for this
learner?

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Review

When you know individual children well, you can support their learning even better. For example, a teacher or teaching assistant who knows about Mazosi's home situation would know that she needs extra encouragement to do well in school. A teaching assistant could sit with Mazosi during lessons and help her to pay attention, remind her to bring books and pencils to school, and talk with Mazosi about the importance of education.

Your job as a Scholar and Teaching Assistant is to support teachers and children. It can be useful to observe an individual learner, especially when he or she is not successful in school. For example, if a child can not work out a maths exercise, you could watch her carefully in maths lessons to see whether she is listening and understanding – and if she is not, then you could explain the exercise and give the child extra encouragement.

To finish this unit, please read this passage about the importance of child study:

Tailors work with cloth, carpenters work with wood. In schools we work with children – precious human life. Children are not little adults. Their emotional, physical, mental, and intellectual foundations are still forming. Children are sometimes joyful, and sometimes they are sad. They can be talkative and they can be quiet. To be a child is to experience discoveries, emotions and energy. Children are unique and complex. They are often not able to talk to us to explain their behaviour. So when we work with children in schools it is important for us to get to know them. When we do this we have a better chance of teaching children well.

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:

Mentor's comments and evaluation

Your own reflection as a Mentor on what you have learned through mentoring the Scholar through this unit

[illegible]

Mentor's signature: Date:

Head Teacher's signature: Date:

Theme 2 Unit 4: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's 'Teacher Professionalism'

In Unit 4 'Teacher Professionalism' Scholars will begin to learn about how teachers manage and organise lessons. They will also begin to learn about the ways teachers work and what teachers must be able to do. This will help them find more ways to support the teacher and the learners.

The Scholar will need to observe a lesson. The class teacher might not feel comfortable with this. As Mentor you might want to explain that this observation is to help the Scholar to develop as a Teaching Assistant to be able to support teachers and learners better. You should also offer to help the Scholar to be ready and prepared for the observation she needs to complete in this unit.

Scholars will also look again at the goals which they wrote in Theme 1 Unit 5 ('Helping in the classroom') and think about what they have achieved so far, and what they still need to work on. At the meeting with the Scholar, discuss and review the goals she set herself at the end of Theme 1. She might need your help to review these, and to identify realistic and achievable ways of updating these goals. Your experience as a teacher will be very valuable to the Scholar in this unit.

You might also find that this unit encourages you to reflect further on your own teaching practice and identify aspects you can work on as you continue supporting the Scholars in the programme. In Theme 1 Unit 5, you set yourself some goals too. You should also take some time to review these goals and identify your achievements in meeting them, and the work you still have to do over the next terms. At the end of this unit there is a page for you to write your reflections on the goals you set yourself in Theme 1 Unit 5.

Theme 2 Unit 4

Teacher professionalism

In this unit of Theme 2 you will begin to learn about how teachers manage and organise lessons. This will help you find more ways to support the teacher and the learners. You will also begin to learn about the ways teachers work and what teachers must be able to do. You will also look again at the goals you wrote in Theme 1 Unit 5 and think about what you have achieved so far.

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

1. knowledge of how lessons are organised (classroom organisation)
2. understanding of some of the issues which can affect lessons
3. skills in reviewing your personal goals.

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Classroom organisation: how teachers plan what to teach and what resources to use in lessons.

Professionalism: expert, high-quality and skilled working.

Timing

Four hours each week during two weeks. You will need to observe a lesson. Be sure to read the preparation reading carefully so that you know what to look for, as you observe.

Study activity

Preparation reading

1. There are many things going on in a busy classroom, and you can benefit from watching and appreciating what the teacher needs to organise and manage.

There are many aspects to **classroom organisation**, such as:

- The classroom environment
- Resources for learning
- What learners do
- The subject (such as mathematics, science, language) and the difficulty of the subject
- How the teacher communicates – by explaining or demonstrating, reading or writing
- The learners themselves. You might know a learner who is always late for school because she has to travel a long distance from her village. You might know a learner who cannot come to school because of illness. You might know of learners who are hungry. All of these things affect children's ability to learn.
- What the learners know from previous lessons and from their home life.

Real life example

2. Read the text below about a mathematics lesson in a primary school in Mwanza. As you read the text, think about the kinds of teaching methods you have experienced yourself as a learner.

Mr Polepole was a new teacher in Standard 4 at Thombari Primary School in Mwanza District. One day he delivered a mathematics lesson on adding two sets of three-digit numbers (such as $324 + 658$). Around 11am, having spoken to the learners continuously for 30 minutes, Mr Polepole noticed that most of the learners were sleeping. He became very angry and started shouting at the learners.

The Head teacher became aware of this and asked some of the Standard 4 learners why they had fallen asleep in the maths lesson. The children said that Mr Polepole spoke about mathematical terms which they did not understand such as: 'integer', 'digits', 'calculate', 'product' and 'place value'. And Mr Polepole had lectured on only one way to add three-digit numbers rather than demonstrating different ways to do this, so that learners could practise different addition methods. The Head teacher learned that the children were not participating in the lesson and so they became tired and unmotivated.

The Head teacher discussed this with Mr Polepole. He advised the teacher to involve the learners more actively in lessons, suggesting for instance that the teacher organises the learners in small groups to work out a maths problem using practical resources and examples from real life. The Head teacher also suggested that Mr Polepole should use some of the fast learners to help teach the slower ones, and demonstrate different written and mental calculation methods. He helped Mr Polepole plan some lessons and after Mr Polepole had taught each lesson they talked together about what went well and what could be done better, thinking about different ways to teach the same thing. Mr Polepole found this very helpful.

Since then, Mr Polepole has tried to use a mix of teaching methods. He demonstrates with practical examples where possible, and organises learners in groups to work out problems. He is also more aware of the vocabulary he uses and changes it so that learners can understand the lesson.

The school where you are today may be similar or different to this case study. Good teachers are always ready to be learners themselves, and to accept new and better ways of teaching.

Practical activity

Arrange to observe a lesson this week. Speak with the teacher about the best time to do this. You may need to explain that for your School Experience you need to watch classroom lessons to understand teaching and learning.

As you observe the lesson, make notes in the spaces below about these three topics:

The classroom

What do you see? Are there tables, chairs, and books? Is there a place where the teacher can write or keep books for different lessons? Where does the teacher stand? Do the learners sit or stand, or move around? You could make a drawing of the classroom.

Learning resources

What do you see? Are there tools or resources the teacher gives out – books, paper, pens, stones, sticks, or art material? What are the resources for learners in the lesson, and how are they used? Does the teacher demonstrate or explain what to do? Are resources given to all the learners? Do learners share them? Do they use the resources appropriately?

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What learners do

What do you see? Are learners reading, writing, repeating/chanting, discussing, drawing, or making something with their hands? Do they work alone or in groups? Do they find the task easy or difficult? Are they concentrating?

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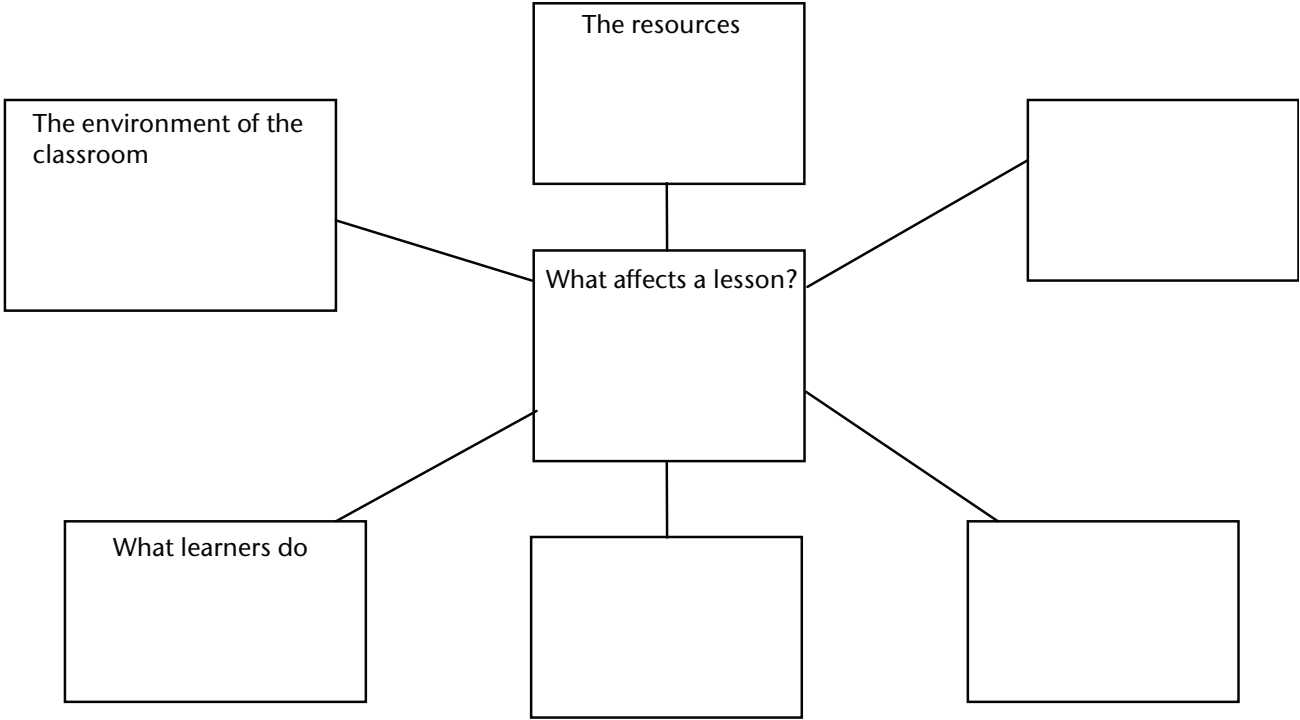
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Review

Good teachers organise resources, activities and the classroom environment so that children can participate and learn. Thinking about the lesson you observed, you concentrated on three key aspects: the classroom, the resources, and what the learners did. We have made you a diagram to show this.

But you can see that we have left some blank boxes around ‘What affects a lesson’. As you observed the lesson, you might have noticed other aspects – such as the difficulty of the subject, the languages the teacher and the learners speak, the authority of the teacher, the number of learners, gender differences, the weather at the time, or even something happening outside the school. In the blank boxes, you can write a few words about other aspects which you feel affected the lesson you watched, and you can add more boxes if you wish.



We would like you to think about why teachers choose certain methods to teach. This depends on: the size of the classroom and the number of learners, the teacher’s educational training, the rules of the school, the age of the learners and the available resources. The lesson you observed may have been affected by some or all of these aspects.

To finish this unit, think about the goals you wrote in Theme 1 Unit 5 ‘Helping in the Classroom’. Read them again and write answers to these questions:

Have your goals changed?

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What have you accomplished?

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What do you still need to do?

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Who or what has helped you?

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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:

Reviewing your goals from Theme 1

Go back to the goals you set yourself in Theme 1 Unit 5. Have you achieved your goals? Do you still need to do some work on these? Use the space below to write your reflections:

Have your goals changed?

What have you accomplished?

What do you still need to do?

Who or what has helped you?

What have you done yourself to accomplish your goals?

Mentor's comments and evaluation

Your own reflection as a Mentor on what you have learned through mentoring the Scholar through this unit

This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It features multiple sets of horizontal dotted lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. The paper is otherwise blank, with no text or other markings.

Mentor's signature: Date:

Head Teacher's signature: Date:

Theme 2 Unit 5: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's 'Overview of Primary School Learning Areas'

In Theme 3 of School Experience Year 1, Scholars work with some areas of the primary school curriculum in Malawi. This final unit of Theme 2 gives the Scholars an introduction to the curriculum and how their local environment and community can provide good resources for learning. All learning activities in the primary school are based on the subjects of the primary curriculum. From their experience as a learner, Scholars will already know something about this.

You might want to speak with the Teaching Assistant about how she feels about the different Learning Areas in the curriculum. Does she feel confident about them? Are there any where she thinks she might need your help? Does she feel she has specific skills which will help her in a particular area? These are aspects that will be able to support her better in Theme 3 and in the activities she will practice in the classroom next term.

Your experience of the primary curriculum will be crucial to support the Scholars. You will also be able to help them to see how using locally available resources helps learners and teachers in schools. Discuss with the Scholar the resources available in your school and the impact this has on the children's learning and the teachers' teaching.

In the next Theme, the Teaching Assistants will be involved in creating resources to support learning in different curriculum areas.

Theme 2 Unit 5

Overview of primary school Learning Areas

Unit 5 is an overview of the primary curriculum in Malawi.

In Theme 3 you will learn in more detail about the primary school curriculum. All learning activities in the primary school are based on the subjects of the primary curriculum. From your experience as a learner yourself, you will already know something about this.

In Theme 3 you will also learn about how your local environment and community can be good resources for learning.

This unit is two weeks long. You will need to plan and manage your study time to complete the reading and activities in the given time.

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

1. your knowledge of the primary school curriculum in Malawi
2. your understanding of how your local environment and community can be good learning resources
3. your skills in planning and managing your study time.

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Curriculum: the subjects that are required to be taught and learned in school.

Topic: an area of knowledge in a subject, such as counting in numeracy.

Timing

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

Study activity _____

Reading: The Primary School Curriculum in Malawi

Free Primary Education (FPE) was introduced in Malawi in 1994. Primary education in Malawi is universal: this means that every child has the right to go to primary school without paying. In 2007 Malawi developed a new primary school curriculum. The word 'subjects' was replaced with 'Learning Areas'.

In the Infant Phase (Standards 1 and 2), the Learning Areas and the amount of time they should be taught are shown in this table:

Learning Area	Literacy	Numeracy	Social Studies	Expressive Arts
Time	40%	35%	15%	10%
Topics	English Chichewa Local languages	Mathematics	Bible Knowledge Religious Education (Christianity, Islam and African traditional religions) Life Skills (Health, HIV and AIDS)	Physical Education Music Creative Arts

In the Junior Phase (Standards 3–5), social and environmental sciences, science and technology, and agriculture are added.

In the Senior Phase (Standards 6–8), social and environmental sciences has history, geography and current affairs added to it.

Children should normally start primary school at the age of six and remain there for eight years. But as you will know from your own experiences, there are many problems such as:

- Many schools do not offer Standards 1 through to 8
- High numbers of children – especially girls – leave primary school (in 2010 the national progression rate to Standard 8 was approximately 42% for boys and 38% for girls)
- Large class sizes, especially in Standards 1 and 2
- Teachers who are not qualified

HIV and AIDS are affecting the number of teachers and learners in primary schools. HIV and AIDS have caused many teachers to be absent. Large numbers of children are orphans due to HIV and AIDS, and these children are less likely to go to school.

Practical activity

Your classroom timetable

Here is a timetable for a week of Learning Areas in a Standard 2 class. It was written by Thokozani, who is a Scholar in Salima – you may remember her from Theme 1 Unit 4:

Learning Area	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Literacy	Chichewa Topic – Kumva: Malonje ayankha moni English Topic – Listening to different sounds of letters: A, B and C	Chichewa Topic – Kuyankhula: Malonje – afunsa ndi kuyankha moni English Topic – Speaking: socialise with others – greetings	Chichewa Topic – Kuwerenga: Mayina a zinthu English Topic – Reading: developing letter-sound awareness – words with letters A–C	Chichewa Topic – Kulemba: Maonekedwe a zinthu English Topic – Writing: copying names and words	Chichewa Topic – Mafunso ndi Mayankho English Topic – Structure and language use: asking and answering simple questions
Numeracy	Counting at intervals of 2	Describing money up to MK100	Recognising three-dimensional shapes	Estimating length using non-standard units	Copying a simple pattern with one variation
Social Studies	Life Skills – caring for the nose and eyes	Bible Knowledge – the family as an institution created by God	Life Skills – common accidents	Religious Education – roles of children from a religious perspective	Life Skills – developing relationships
Expressive Arts	Free body movements	Self-expression through dance	Identifying materials for making collage	Performing songs and dances to convey messages	Making simple musical instruments

Can you see how your MSCE study is important to supporting learners in the primary school – especially in literacy and numeracy?

Now go to the next grid and write in the timetable for a week of the Learning Areas in the classroom where you help. Ask the teacher or your Mentor to assist you. You can work with other Scholars in your school to do this activity.

Try to estimate the amount of time in which each Learning Area is taught.

Date:

Learning Area in my classroom	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Literacy					
Numeracy					
Social Studies					
Expressive Arts					
Other topic or Learning Area					

Study activity

Reading: Local resources for learning

Read the following statement carefully and slowly:

Many teachers think of teaching and learning resources as commercially produced instructional materials only, such as printed charts, pupils' books, teachers' guides, globes, marker pens and radios. The government is normally seen as the only source of these materials. If they are not provided, teachers have a ready excuse for not using teaching and learning resources. Such a narrow view of educational resources can negatively affect the quality of teaching and learning.

This is a very forceful – and critical – statement. Do you agree or disagree with it?

Printed charts, books, pens and paper are important and valuable resources for learning – but these are not always available, and there are not enough for every learner.

But there is another way teachers can motivate learners and open their eyes to the world around us – by using the local environment. We are surrounded by natural aids for learning that cost little or nothing. In your community there are people who are experts in all kinds of things. There are also natural resources – animals, plants, trees, crops and the land.

We will look at these two types of resources for learning: human resources and natural resources.

Human resources

Think about the people in the community around the primary school. Do you know a shopkeeper, a farmer, a tailor or a dressmaker? Perhaps you know someone who is talented at games, singing, dancing or art. Maybe you know someone who has travelled to a large town or city, or to another nation.

These are people who can help children to learn. They have special skills, knowledge, talents and experiences. They can also have personal qualities such as calmness, determination, courage or a sense of humour.

- Crafts people such as weavers, tailors and artists can help children learn practical, craft and creative skills.
- Farmers can help children to learn about the land – how crops grow and are harvested.
- Village Headmen and Chiefs can talk to children about duties, traditions and historical events.
- Nurses can talk to children about health and safety.
- Midwives can talk to children about babies, health and growing.
- Police can talk to children about behaviour, crime and laws.
- Parents can talk about their life, health, work and family experiences.

Looking at this list of people, how can their skills and knowledge support the Learning Areas of the primary school curriculum?

Weaver, Tailor, Artist = Expressive Arts

Farmer = Environmental Sciences

Village Head, Nurses, Midwives, Police = Social Studies

Shopkeeper = Mathematics, Numeracy

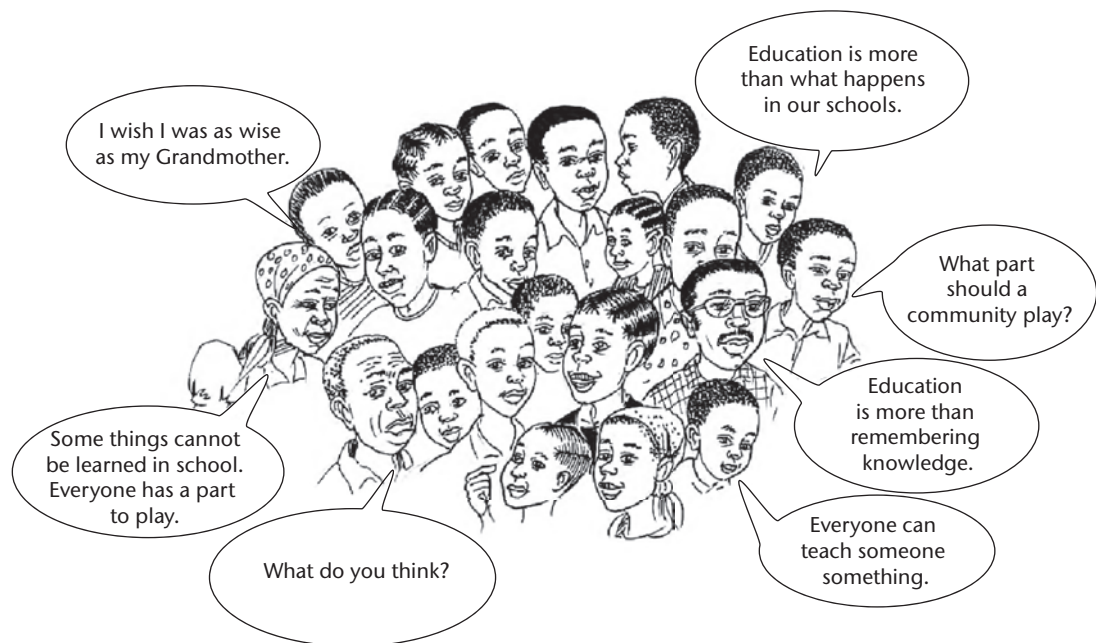
Parents = Life Skills

Local people in the classroom

Maybe your teacher is doing some work on money in Mathematics. A local shopkeeper could talk to the children about how he uses money in his work.

Maybe your teacher is doing some work on colour and pattern in art lessons. A local dressmaker or tailor could show children how she uses traditional fabrics.

Learners will be interested to hear about what these people do, and they will want to ask questions – this will encourage their learning and their understanding.



The community can play a role in educating children

Later on, we will ask you to think about a local person you yourself could invite into the classroom next year when you are helping in a Standard 7 or Standard 8 classroom.

Natural resources

Wherever your school is, there will be a variety of living and non-living things that you could collect and bring into the classroom for learners to investigate and observe. You could do the collecting, or you could take a group of children out to do the collecting, with the teacher's permission.

You can bring in:

- rocks, stones and leaves to study
- animal products such as skins or leather – maybe even the bones of an animal
- creatures such as grasshoppers, certain spiders or other insects that can be kept for a short period of time (make sure learners observe the creatures safely – in a gourd or in a jar)
- plants and parts of plants, fruits and vegetables, seeds.

Collecting resources

There are many things that you might be able to collect from the local environment such as:

- bottle tops to use as counters
- photographs and illustrations from newspapers and magazines
- letters, words and sentences from advertising or food packets
- recyclable materials such as card, paper, wire, wood, fabric, plastic
- containers, cloth and plastic sheets

These are materials which can be gathered at any time, so when the teacher wants learners to make posters about science there is some card for each group to write on; and when the teacher wants learners to practise reading and writing, there is a collection of letters, words and phrases to look at and copy.

When you collect materials, always ask for permission.

Outside the classroom

Taking learners outside to see plants and animals in the real world can inspire them to look at their local environment, for example:

- homes and other buildings made from different materials
- the local stream
- where the animals graze
- the native trees
- the different crops
- the local grasses
- the changes in the weather.

All of this will interest learners and encourage their thinking.

Practical activity

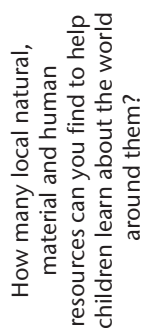
TALULAR

Look closely and carefully at the illustration on the next page. It has many ideas and objects. Take some time to do this.



This double page contains drawings of hundreds of objects and ideas. All of them could be used as teaching and learning resources in our primary and secondary schools. Hundreds of them could be used to enrich teaching and learning in higher education institutions like teacher training colleges and universities. The Ministry cannot and will not be able to provide everything we need for teaching. We must use our own initiative too!

Now take up the Talular Challenge



The poster invites us to identify resources for teaching and learning in our local environment. You will see on the poster the word TALULAR. This is a word developed by teachers in Malawi which stands for: Teaching And Learning Using Locally Available Resources.

Identify three things from the poster that you think could be used to help children learn. We have done the first one for you. You can work with other Scholars on this activity.

1. Plants:

- to learn about their importance to the environment
- to learn which ones are safe to eat and which are poisonous
- to learn which plants are grown by the farmer and which plants grow in the wild
- to learn which can be used for medicines.

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Review

All of the Learning Areas of the primary curriculum can be taught using locally available resources. Local materials cost little or nothing, and they are environmentally friendly.

Using local human and natural resources can:

- encourage learners' understanding and thinking
- open the eyes of learners to the world around them
- develop the school's relationship with the community
- link the Learning Areas of the primary school curriculum to learners' real lives
- introduce learners to new experiences.

Using locally available resources can also help to encourage children's creativity. For example, simply showing learners a car is not as effective as giving them some wire, tins, string or some clay for them to make their own car models.



Acknowledgements

Artwork (pages 68, 70 and 72): Images courtesy of the Malawi Institute of Education

To finish this unit, think about the Learning Areas of the primary curriculum for Standards 1 and 2. Write a few words about how you think a local resource could help children in each of the learning areas.

Thokozani, the Scholar from Salima, has given us one or two suggestions. Try to add your own ideas to this table. Talk with the class teacher, your Mentor and other Scholars, to share ideas.

Learning Areas	Local resources	How it could be used to help children
Literacy	Food packets, magazines, newspapers	Reading, copying, writing Learning about different kinds of writing such as advertising and journalism
Numeracy	Bottle tops	Counting Adding and subtracting
Social Studies		
Expressive Arts		

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:

Mentor's comments and evaluation

Your own reflection as a Mentor on what you have learned through mentoring the Scholar through this unit

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Mentor's signature: Date:

Head Teacher's signature: Date:



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