

School experience

Theme 5: Social issues in education

Mentor 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

Mentor’s Folder Year 2

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Theme 5: Social issues in education

Mentor's Introduction

Welcome to Theme 5 of School Experience, Year 2.

In Theme 5, the focus for the Scholars/Teaching Assistants is on social issues in education, life skills and cross cutting issues.

In Malawi, there is a Life Skills Curriculum in addition to the academic subjects. This special curriculum is included in the school because a child's health, social and moral development is just as important as her or his academic learning.

Social issues, life skills and cross cutting issues are very big topics, and all these areas cannot be covered in this Theme. However it is important that in your role as a Mentor you work with the Teaching Assistants to help them understand how learning is affected by cultural traditions, health, physical, social and moral issues. Your long experience as a teacher in Malawi will support you when discussing some of the issues that are raised in this Theme.

In Theme 5 there are some issues or readings the Scholars/Teaching Assistants, and in some cases you as their Mentor, might find difficult to deal with, for example rape or the role of families in education. In such cases your support and careful approach to these issues might be required. If you feel it is difficult for you to address these issues with them please discuss this with your head teacher and together you can find a suitable way to support the Scholar in these areas.

Here is the overview of Theme 5 for year 2:

Theme 5: Social Issues in Education	
Unit 1	The Life Skills Curriculum and Cross Cutting Issues in Education
Unit 2	Attitudes to learning
Unit 3	Supporting differentiated activities
Unit 4	Contributing to assessment and record keeping
Unit 5	Finish and review

Remember to share and discuss examples of how you are all acting as positive role model in the meetings with the Teaching Assistants.

As the Teaching Assistants study through Theme 5, they will continue to work on tasks in the classroom to support the teacher and the learners as in previous Themes.

School Experience Diary

In the Scholars/Teaching Assistants' School Experience Handbook for Theme 5 and Theme 6 special 'School Experience Diary' pages have been included for them to keep a record of what they do each week in the classroom and the school. Each week the Teaching Assistants are asked to write about their thoughts and ideas, and things that happen. They can also add any notes about their meetings with you as their Mentor. They can choose to write a little every day, or write longer sections at the end of each week.

When Teaching Assistants write in their School Experience Diary, they should think about the four areas of support that they, as a Teaching Assistant, provide: support for the teacher, support for the curriculum, support for learners, and support for the school.

As their Mentor, you can use these School Experience Diary pages at the regular meetings you have with the Teaching Assistants to discuss how their role is progressing and developing in the classroom. In these meetings it will also be useful to explore new aspects or tasks they might want to undertake in the classroom to support the teacher and the learners and identify aspects where the Teaching Assistant might need your support in, for example to speak with teachers or to facilitate resources.

You can find an example of the School Experience Diary in the next page. The Scholars/Teaching Assistants have 10 copies of the School Experience Diary in their folder, one for each week in this Theme.

Week 1: Week beginning on:.....

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday

Unit 1: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's: The Life Skills Curriculum and cross cutting issues in education

In this first unit the Teaching Assistants will become familiar with the Life Skills Curriculum and cross cutting issues in education. An important aspect of this unit is for the Teaching Assistant to recognize that thanks to her experiences in life, she already is in possession of skills and experiences that will help her to support the Life Skills Curriculum in school.

When discussing the Life Skills Curriculum and cross cutting issues in education as a Mentor and an experienced teacher, you can provide examples of how you used your life experiences at the beginning of your teaching career, and how you have developed and acquired new skills each year to support your teaching in school.

At the beginning of the unit, the Teaching Assistants' resources include a description of the areas of the life skills curriculum in Standards 7 and 8. Many of the Teaching Assistants will be familiar with these, and will have already come across some of them in Term 1. In your meeting with the Scholar/Teaching Assistant she might need your support and experience to understand the descriptions provided and think of practical examples of how this is addressed in the school.

The real life example included in the section 'Why should primary schools teach the Life Skills Curriculum?' addresses issues such as the effect of rape and early pregnancy on education which some Teaching Assistants might find difficult to discuss with you. If this is the case, you might want to suggest they can talk about this with other Scholars, the head teachers, other teachers or members of her family or community.

The Teaching Assistants are also encouraged to think about cross cutting issues that affect education as well as other aspects of their life such as health, economy, the community or others. When discussing this with the Scholar draw on her experience and your own experience to support her to understand how many factors affect education regularly.

Finally, the Teaching Assistants have to complete the School Experience Diary each week. It is important that you discuss this with them at each meeting to ensure they are completing this.

Unit 1: The Life Skills Curriculum and cross cutting issues in education

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

- Knowledge of the Life Skills Curriculum and some cross cutting issues
- Skills in supporting the Life Skills Curriculum
- Understanding of how your own experiences can help you support life skills learning

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Access: to get, have or achieve (e.g. 'girls need more access to education')

Commitment: promise, pledge or guarantee

Equity: fairness

Diverse: varied, different

Entrepreneurship: running a business, management and organization skills

Extend: develop, expand, improve knowledge

Health promotion: behaviour and knowledge that leads to good health

Informed decisions: choices based on having information and knowledge

Prevalent: frequent, widespread

Potential: something that has not happened but could happen e.g. 'a potential danger'

Self esteem: self respect, confidence

Widest sense: far reaching, knowledge and understanding of many aspects of a topic

Timing

You have approximately two weeks to complete the readings and practical activities in this unit. Skim read the unit now, so that you can plan your time well.

Study reading 1

Learners in Standard 7 and Standard 8 study the academic subjects, of course. These subjects are important for secondary education and getting employment. But learners also study a Life Skills Curriculum. Read the descriptions on the next page about what is covered in this curriculum, and the expected outcomes for learners. As you read, underline any words or sentences you don't understand, and discuss them with another Teaching Assistant or your Mentor.

Areas of the Life Skills Curriculum for Standard 7 and Standard 8**Health promotion**

The learner will be able to make informed decisions and demonstrate health promotion behaviour in his/her personal life as well as in his/her community and wider environment with particular attention to prevalent diseases such as malaria, STIs and HIV and AIDS.

Physical development

The learner will be able to demonstrate an understanding of how physical growth is linked to social, emotional and personal development through participation in activities such as play, games and sports in order to contribute to the development of positive attitudes, values and self esteem.

Social development

The learner will be able to live and work effectively as a member of the family, a group, a community and a nation with respect for gender equity and show an understanding of individual rights and responsibilities within the wider society.

Moral development

The learner will be able to demonstrate an understanding of diverse cultures through a commitment to moral values, human rights and rule of law.

Personal development

The learner will be able to use positive self esteem for achieving and extending personal potential to respond effectively to daily challenges.

Entrepreneurship and world of work

The learner will be able to understand the world of work in its widest sense and demonstrate how to access further knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for work.

Real life example 1:**Why should primary schools teach the Life Skills Curriculum?**

Read the real life example below. As you read, think about how each of the Life Skills Curriculum areas could have helped this situation.

Once upon a time there was a girl who came from Thedzi village. The name of the girl was **Chikondi**. She came from a God-fearing family. She was fifteen years old. Chikondi was going to a local Secondary School. She was in Form 4.

Chikondi liked to chat with friends. One day her friend took her to a party. At the party her friends were dancing. Chikondi was not dancing because she was feeling shy. Her friends told her to drink beer so that she should remove her shyness.

continued

Meanwhile Chikondi drank several beers. She started dancing. Some minutes later Chikondi was not able to walk. And since her friends were also drunk they left Chikondi at the party and went home.

As soon as the girls left five big boys came where Chikondi was sleeping. "Hey you, girl, what are you doing here?" One of the boys asked. Chikondi was not able to answer. When the boys discovered that Chikondi was drunk they raped her.

After some time Chikondi woke up and realised that her friends had gone. She also realised that she had been raped and she cried uncontrollably. She cried for help but no one showed up. She started going home very worried that she might have contracted sexually transmitted diseases or got herself pregnant.

Chikondi went home silently because she was afraid of her parents. Weeks later it was discovered that Chikondi was pregnant. Her parents were angry. She regretted her behaviour. She apologised to her parents. Chikondi dropped out of school. While home she started to grow some vegetables. She sold some of the vegetables and saved the income for herself.

Later Chikondi gave birth to a baby boy and named him Mavuto. Her mother encouraged her to go back to school and offered to take care of her baby. Chikondi promised to work extra hard. She was careful about her friendships. She thought about her future. She wanted to become a doctor at a local hospital.

Now Chikondi is preparing to write her final examination at a medical college to become a doctor. She has been working very hard for the past months and feels confident to pass the exam. Chikondi is excited to become the first doctor from her village.

Is Chikondi being a good role model? Could she do anything differently to be a better role model?

After you have read the example of Chikondi, think about how her behaviour changes from the beginning of the story to the end of the story. Write your answers to the questions below:

Chikondi did not make informed decisions because

.....

.....

.....

.....

She did make some informed decisions because

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.....

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.....

Chikondi's behaviour was not health promoting because

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Her behaviour did become health promoting because

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.....

Chikondi did not have a positive attitude and self esteem because

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She developed a positive attitude and self esteem because

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Do you think Chikondi has entrepreneurship skills? Why?

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What do you think were the important changes for Chikondi's personal and moral development?

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When Chikondi was in primary school, how do you think the Life Skills Curriculum could have helped her behaviour?

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What do you think the other people in Chikondi's life – her parents, her teachers, and her friends – could have done to help her before she got into trouble?

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Chikondi's story is a good example of how we can make serious and dangerous mistakes if we are not educated in Life Skills. But her story also shows that even when we make mistakes we can change and improve, with education and determination.

Which life skills do you think are the most important? Why?

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Practical activity 1:

My life skills

Talk to your Mentor, and to other Teaching Assistants, about this activity.

All of us have skills that we bring to our lives and our work. When you support learners in the Life Skills Curriculum, you can use your own personal experiences as well as school resources.

In the table on the next page, try to give a practical example from your own life experience of the life skills that are listed. You can add other examples that you think of.



Think!

Life Skill	Practical example from my life experience
Health promotion	
Self esteem to achieve and face challenges	
Positive attitudes	
Work effectively	
Respect for girls	
Moral development	
Problem solving	
Understanding rights and responsibilities	
Understanding of diverse cultures	
Entrepreneurship	

Right now in the classroom, what are the learners learning about Life Skills?
What resources are they using?
.....
.....

What activities are they doing?
.....
.....

Do you have personal experience of this topic?
.....
.....

How can your experience support learning in this topic – what could you talk about or explain to learners from your experience?
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.....
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Cross cutting issues in education

Problems such as HIV/AIDS, gender inequality and poverty are called 'cross cutting issues' because they affect many other areas of life: health, education, the economy, families, communities and society. If these issues are not tackled, success in other areas of life will be very limited.

In Malawi, as in many countries around the world, women get less access to education, employment and economic opportunity. Female-headed households are poorer, with greater food insecurity and malnutrition. When women have less education, less training and lower rates of literacy, they are prevented from developing businesses, caring for families or being fully productive in agricultural activities.

It is often said that there is no single household in Malawi that has not been affected by HIV/AIDS. The negative effects of the epidemic have impacted on every aspect of our lives. HIV/AIDS can affect everyone. There is relationship between HIV/AIDS and poverty. Poor people have less education, and may lack important information and skills to protect themselves from HIV. Uneducated girls are particularly vulnerable.

Real life example 2:

Talk to your Mentor, other Teaching Assistants, or a friend about this reading.

"Madalitso, you look unhappy today, what is the matter?" asked the teacher. Madalitso is a 12 year-old girl at Lemba Primary School. She is in Standard 7. She has been looking worried and sad for almost two weeks now. Her teacher Mrs Moyo has noticed this.

Mrs Moyo is worried and concerned about Madalitso's sadness. Madalitso is an intelligent pupil and always well behaved. She is always in the top five positions in examinations in the class. Mrs Moyo has noted that Madalitso's performance in class has been going down.

One day Mrs Moyo called Madalitso to see her in the staff room. While in the staff room Madalitso explained that her plans to become a teacher are being jeopardised. The teacher learnt that in Madalitso's family there are 9 children. Her father, who is a watchman at the trading centre has talked to one of the local business men to find Madalitso a job. He wants Madalitso to be a house girl in town so that the family can get more money to support them.

"Madam I want to continue with my education so that I can be a teacher as you are. But my father will not allow me and says he will not be able to support me. I know he is serious about this because two years ago my elder sister was forced to get married to Mr Zapu who paid two herds of cattle to my father as a bride price. What should I do?" Madalitso lamented.

What do you think are the cross cutting issues affecting Madalitso?

If Madalitso does not stay in school, she can start earning money for her family. What are the benefits and disadvantages of this?

What are the risks if Madalitso takes the job as a house girl in town?

Do you think her teacher, Mrs Moyo, can do anything about this situation? What could happen?

Practical activity 2:

Cross cutting issues in your classroom

Think about the learners in the Standard 7 or Standard 8 classroom where you help, especially the girls. What are the cross cutting issues affecting them? Try to list these issues here. Talk to other Teaching Assistants and your Mentor about this activity.

Mentor 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: _____

Unit 2: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's: Attitudes to learning

Unit 2 encourages the Scholar/Teaching Assistant to think about factors that might affect the attitudes to learning of different members of the community.

When meeting the Teaching Assistant it might be useful to explore whether her attitudes to learning have changed from the time when she was in school, to the time when she had to stop schooling, to her first year as a KGIS Scholar and to the present. She might also have encountered some comments or actions in the community or amongst the Standard 7 and 8 learners related to attitudes to learning which she would find it helpful to discuss with you. In your meetings with the Teaching Assistant you can discuss how she thinks she could influence those comments and actions, or whether she feels in a position to influence positively others' attitudes to learning, particularly the attitudes to learning of the girls in school or attitudes about girls learning that boys could have.

In this unit Scholars engage in a practical activity of creating a book to support their role as a Teaching Assistant. She might ask you for support to source materials or think about a useful topic to use for the book. You might also be interested in creating a book for your own class, or in working together with the Teaching Assistant. to create a joint one. This might be a good experience of collaboration between you two and an example other teachers in your school could be interested in following,

In your meeting with the Scholar, you will be discussing their School Experience Diary. It will be useful to look at the different tasks the Teaching Assistant does each week and see if there are changes where she is increasingly acquiring different roles supporting girls in the classroom.

At these meetings, remember to discuss examples of how you and the Teaching Assistants are regularly acting as good role models to girls in school.

Unit 2: Attitudes to learning

Classroom focus: Attitudes to learning

Classroom project: Book making

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

- Knowledge of some factors that affect attitudes to learning
- Skills in book making to support literacy learning
- Understanding of learners' attitudes in your class

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Factors: facts that influence a situation

Irritating: to make someone annoyed, impatient or angry

Retorted: to answer in a sharp or angry way

Stereotypes: over-simplifications of people based on gender, religion or nationality.

Timing

You have approximately two weeks to complete the readings and practical activities in this unit. Skim read the unit now, so that you can plan your time well.

Study reading 1:

Without a positive attitude, a learner can not develop good study skills and habits. Attitudes to study can be affected by many things. Read the real life story below.

Education shapes Makazi's future

In a certain village there were two girls named Loma and Makazi. The two girls liked each other very much. They used to do most things together. They went to the same primary school and they were in the same class. However, most of the time Loma was forced by her parents to go to school. When learners were given homework, Loma never did it. Loma did not like school. She had never learned to read, and so she was not able to study and succeed. Makazi did enjoy going to school. She liked reading and mathematics. Because she enjoyed learning, she got better at studying.

One day, when the girls were in Standard 8, Loma told Makazi that instead of going to school they should go fetch fire wood and also get some wild fruits from a nearby bush. Makazi did not like this idea, but because Loma was her best friend she was persuaded to do it. So they did not go to school that day.

The next day they went to school. Their teacher Mr Kalanda wanted to know where the two girls had been the previous day. They could not give a valid

Remember to
write in the
School Experience Diary.

What did I do
this week?

reason, so the teacher punished them. They were both made to clean the latrines. The following day, Loma told Makazi that she would not go to school because she was embarrassed by the punishment. She said the teacher hated them. Makazi tried to reason with her friend but she did not succeed. Makazi told her parents what had happened. They made her stop playing with Loma.

Loma stopped going school. Later she got married at the age of 15. Makazi on the other hand continued with her education. The more she read and studied, the more she achieved. She went to one of the universities. She studied a course in education because she had always wanted to become a teacher like her childhood role model, her Standard 7 teacher Madam Tukuka.

Loma did not like going to school because she could not read. Not being able to read affected Loma's attitudes to study. But Makazi liked school, and grew to develop good study habits such as:

Concentration

Perseverance

Punctuality

Taking responsibility

Asking and taking advice

Completing work

Planning ahead

There are many possible reasons why Loma can not read in Standard 8, even though she has been going to school since Standard 1. Can you think of some possible reasons?

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Do you think Mr Kalanda's punishment was too harsh? What could he have done to punish the girls for their absence, but still encourage them to come to school?

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.....

.....

Do you think Makazi's parents gave her good advice?

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Study reading 2:**Attitudes to study are affected by traditional culture**

Awurama is the eldest in a family of three girls and a boy. She is brilliant and well behaved. She is in Standard 8, after being first in Standard 7. She has the support of her parents, who are proud of her. But she is losing interest in mathematics and science. Her friend, Patani, notices the gradual decline in her performance.

'Everybody is wondering what has gone wrong with you, Aruwama. You used to assist most of us here, including the boys, with our homework. I just wonder what has gone wrong with you', complained Patani. Aruwama smiled and turned her face away and retorted, 'Not really, I am still working hard but the teacher is boring. She does not impress me. I just don't like her. Although she does not make irritating remarks like Mr Makoni, our head teacher. I hate them both!'

The two friends were silent for a while, then Patani remarked, 'Maths and Science are important subjects if you still want to be a doctor as you used to tell me.'

'But I am not doing too badly in these subjects', argued Aruwama, 'and in any case, learning to cook is very important for us girls as future housewives. I will be a good mother and my father will get bride price which he will use to educate my baby brother Takudzwa. My Standard 5 teacher, Mrs. Mukapa, always reminds us of that. I think she is right. I used to enjoy her lessons'.

'Yes', admitted Patani, 'that might be true, but you need to consider the realities of today's world of science and technology. You can hardly survive without mathematics and science. You need to work hard as before, if you want to do well in secondary school, and go to university. Then you can find a good job and have a beautiful home'.

Identify traditional values and stereotypes which are interfering with Aruwama's attitudes to study.

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Study reading 3:**Attitudes to study are affected by the learning environment.**

Maureen is 11 years old. She loves to play 'touch and go' and wants to be a typist when she grows up. Maureen lives with her grandmother and two of her brothers. Her parents live and work in Nsanje. They sent her to Blantyre in the hope that she can get a better education.

Maureen attends a school near Blantyre, but she has no classroom. Maureen's school has 2,300 pupils. The buildings are very old. There are big cracks in the walls, and there are big holes in the floors. It is not safe for the learners to sit inside. Maureen's class sit outside under a tree for lessons.

Maureen has not given up on her dreams of education and employment, but she says it is difficult to learn in her school. Sometimes she does not want to come to school. "Our clothes get dirty all the time," Maureen says. "We get rained on, and sometimes it is very cold. Also, it is hard to concentrate with the noisy traffic passing nearby."

List the factors in Maureen's learning environment that prevent her from having good attitudes to study

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Practical activity 1:

When learners find school a difficult place to be, they can not develop good attitudes to study. This puts their education at risk. School can be difficult for physical reasons, as Maureen's story shows. School can be difficult for personal and emotional reasons, as Loma's story shows. Also, traditional values can interfere with good attitudes to study, as Aruwama's story shows.

When a school is a good place to be, learners develop good attitudes to study. A school should be physically comfortable, where adults are kind to learners, and where learners can achieve their potential. What makes a school a good place? It is a combination of factors: the environment, the people, and the support for learners.

Think carefully about your school, the classroom and the learners that you help.

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What factors **help** learners in the school to develop good attitudes to study?

What factors **prevent** learners in the school from developing good attitudes to study?

It is important to make the classroom a positive learning environment as much as possible, so that all learners develop good attitudes to school. Even when the physical environment of a classroom is poor, the way learners are treated by adults can make a difference. Treating learners with kindness and understanding can help them develop good attitudes to school. It is important to encourage girls to study hard so they can achieve the best in life and have good opportunities.

Classroom focus: Book making

In Standard 1 or Standard 2, you might have made a big book or a small book for the classroom.

There are many reasons to make books for a classroom:

- It builds a classroom library
- It can cover topics that interest learners
- It can create books that are meaningful to learners and even personalised to them
- It shows the class that books and reading are valued
- It can make books at the level of learners' reading abilities
- It is low cost and can use locally available materials

In the next pages are three examples of books you can make yourself from locally available materials. Read these examples. After you have read the examples, choose one that you would like to try out.

Try making one small book. Do this with another Teaching Assistant, or with a friend. The book can be about anything you want. It can be about a learning area, such as numeracy, or it can be about a Life Skills topic such as HIV prevention. Teaching Assistants have made books for learners about

Think about how you can be a good role model to influence learners' attitudes to study.

A soft book made of cloth.

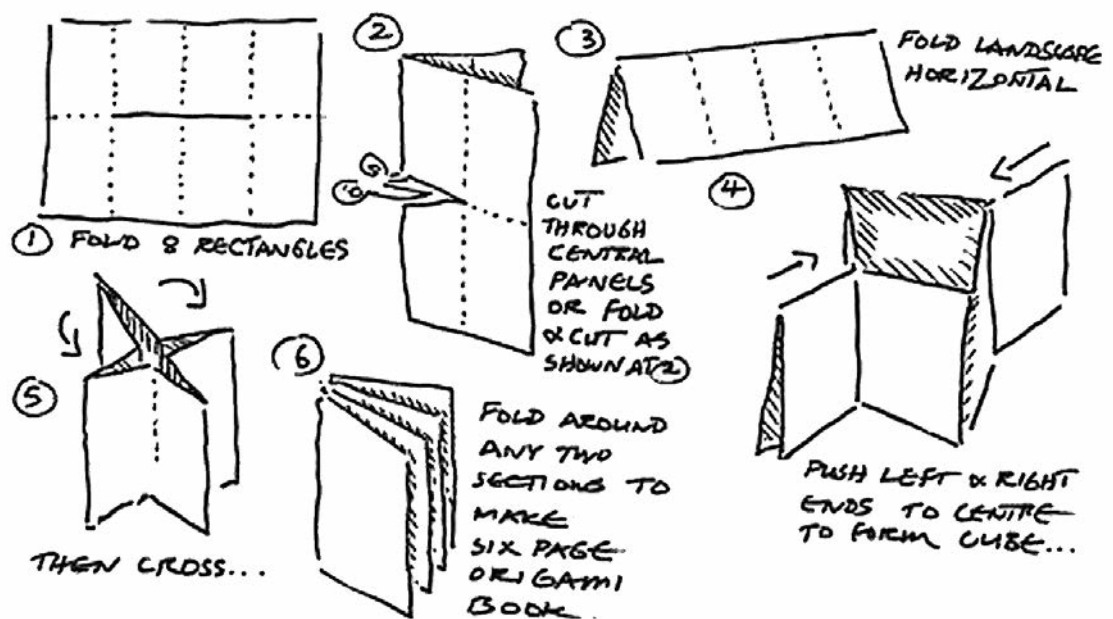
You will need:

- Any cloth, cut into squares
- White cloth, cut into smaller squares
- Thread and needle
- Pens

First make the white pages of the book. Choose your topic. Write the words or sentences – keep these very short. Illustrate the book with very simple drawings, like in the picture.

Sew the white cloth onto the larger squares.

Sew the larger squares together along one edge.



A stick and elastic book

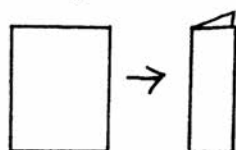


This is a fun book because it is so simple and so clever. The directions start by folding paper in half the long way. By doing this you can reuse paper as long as it has writing on only one side. You can also use single sheets of paper. If you use new paper, you can skip the first step and make a larger book. Your book can have more pages but it will be harder to punch through all the layers at once. Although the book is simple, punching the holes and manipulating the elastic can be awkward. I don't make it with groups but it's perfect with a few children.

You Need:

- ② 2 sheets paper (it can have writing on one side)
- ① elastic band (I use ones from vegetables and newspaper delivery)
- ① stick about the height of the paper after step 1
- ① Hole punch

1. Fold each paper in half the long way so that is long and skinny like a hot dog. If it has writing on it, the writing should be on the inside.



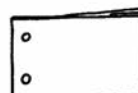
2. Fold each paper in half the other way.



3. Tuck one folded piece inside the other.



4. Punch two holes through all the layers about 1/4" in from the folded edge of the papers.



5. Wrap the elastic around the top of the stick and put the end into and through the top hole.



6. Turn the book over. At the back of the book, pull the end of the elastic down and put it through the bottom hole. Insert the other end of the stick into the loop.

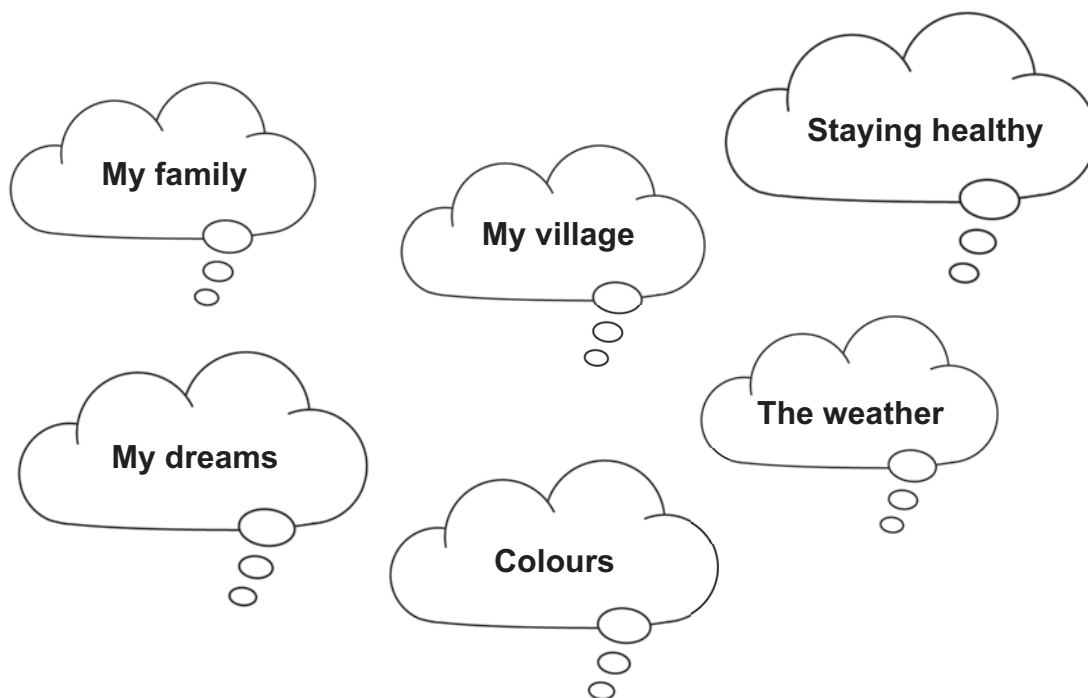


More bookmaking ideas are available at Susan's website, makingbooks.com, which has more projects and information about making books with children. Ebooks are available for purchase at the Bookstore including *Multicultural Books To Make And Share* which contains sixteen bookmaking projects from around the world.



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Try making one small book. Do this with another Teaching Assistant, or with a friend. The book can be about anything you want. It can be about a learning area, such as numeracy, or it can be about a Life Skills topic such as HIV prevention. Teaching Assistants have made books for learners about.



What do you think learners in your classroom would like to read?

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We hope you enjoy this activity!

Share your book with learners, your Mentor and other Teaching Assistants. Maybe you can work together to start a small library.

Review

You have kept a record of what you do in lessons to help the teacher and the learners. This is important information and good evidence of your contributions to learning and to the school.

Make time to ask your teacher and your Mentor for feedback on your support in the classroom. Are there other ways of working you would like to try out?

Make a note of these here.

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Remember to
write in the
School Experience Diary.

What did I do
this week?

Teaching Assistant's report and self-assessment

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Don't forget to include examples of how you are acting as a good role model to learners in school, particularly for girls.

Mentor comments and evaluation

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Signed (by Scholar)

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Date:

Signed (by Mentor)

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Date:

Sources for images of three books

Origami book

<http://whipup.net/2007/10/24/book-review-how-to-make-books/>

Elastic book

<http://www.makingbooks.com/freeprojects.shtml>

Soft cloth books

<http://leafandletterhandmade.blogspot.co.uk/2010/08/preschool-crafts.html>

Mentor 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:

Unit 3: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's: Supporting differentiated activities

In Unit 3 Scholars explore how they can work with the teacher in their role as Teaching Assistants to support learners who learn in different ways and the work of different stakeholders in school, particularly Mothers Groups.

All teachers come across learners who learn in different ways in their classrooms. Although it is not always possible to offer differentiated support to all the learners in a large class, as an experienced teacher you must have faced this situation in a number of occasions. Sharing these experiences with the Teaching Assistant will help her to understand practical examples of differentiated activities, as well as thinking of how she can work with the teacher to support learners who learn in different ways.

Unit 3 also focuses on the role of Stakeholders in education, and particularly on the work of Mothers Groups to support education in Malawi. You might have experience of working with a Mothers Group, or of being a member of one. If there is a Mothers Group in the Scholar's community, she might have been involved in it, as a Mother herself, or her Mother and other family members might have experience of it too. It will be useful to share these experiences when you meet and talk about how the Teaching Assistant could volunteer to do some work with the local Mothers Group.

If there is not a Mothers Group in the community, this might be an aspect that the Head Teacher might be interested in exploring with other members of the community and the school. You and the Scholar might be interested in starting to think about how you could be involved or support its creation.

Remember to encourage the Scholar to add the examples of how she has supported the teacher in differentiated activities in her School Experience diary for these two weeks.

Unit 3: Supporting differentiated activities

Classroom focus: Supporting differentiated activities

Classroom project: Mothers groups

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

- Knowledge of the meaning of differentiation in teaching and learning
- Skills in supporting differentiated learning activities
- Understanding of the role of specific stakeholders in education in Malawi

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Accommodate: to make adjustments, adapt

Capacity: power, ability

Differentiation: making different activities or resources for different needs, responding to different learning needs

Literate / Illiterate: being able to read and write/ not being able to read and write

Numerate: being able to understand and use numbers

Priorities: the most important things

Stakeholders: people who have an interest in making an organisation (such as a school) run well

Tasks: jobs, activities

Timing

You have approximately two weeks to complete the readings and practical activities in this unit. Skim read the unit now, so that you can plan your time well.

Study reading 1: What is differentiation?

Children learn at different rates. Some will understand something before you have finished explaining it, and others will understand only after much additional effort and support. Every learner is different.

Differentiation simply means teaching learners differently according to their needs and their abilities. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods and resources to accommodate different abilities. This is so that every learner can participate and gain as much as they can from lessons. When teachers plan differentiated activities in the classroom, they think about these three questions:

By the end of this lesson, what should learners know?

What should learners be able to understand?

What should learners be able to do?

Remember to
write in the
School Experience Diary.

What did I do
this week?

Here are some types of differentiation:

- by classroom organisation: putting learners into groups or pairs according to ability or by mixed ability
- by task: setting different assignments or goals
- by outcomes: not expecting the same performance from every learner
- by resources: giving learners different tools and materials
- by questioning: asking learners to explain their thinking
- by support: giving more to some learners and less to others

What have you seen in your classroom?

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How does the teacher keep records of learning?

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Here is another type of differentiated planning by Standard 8 teachers for the Science Syllabus:

- **All learners** will be able to plan a scientific investigation
- **Most learners** will be able to conduct a scientific investigation to solve a given problem
- **Some learners** will be able to write a report of a scientific investigation
- **All learners must** identify the parts of the human circulatory system
- **Most learners should** explain the functions of the parts of the human circulatory system
- **Some learners could** apply knowledge of the circulatory system to solve a problem

As you can see, when lessons are planned in this way, even if learners can only do some of the work, they will at least have done what they 'must learn'. It also means that very quick learners can do more without being held back by others.



Think!

Practical activity 1:

During this unit, look for examples of differentiation in the classroom. Use the table below to keep a record.

Type of differentiation	Lesson and activity
by classroom organisation , groups or pair work according to ability or mixed ability	
by task , setting different assignments or goals	
by outcomes , not expecting the same performance from every learner	
by resources , giving learners different tools and materials	
by questioning , asking learners to explain their thinking	
by support , giving more to some learners and less to others	

Talk to your teacher and your Mentor about what you see. Ask how you can be involved in helping the teacher prepare and keep records on differentiated learning activities.

Stakeholders and the school

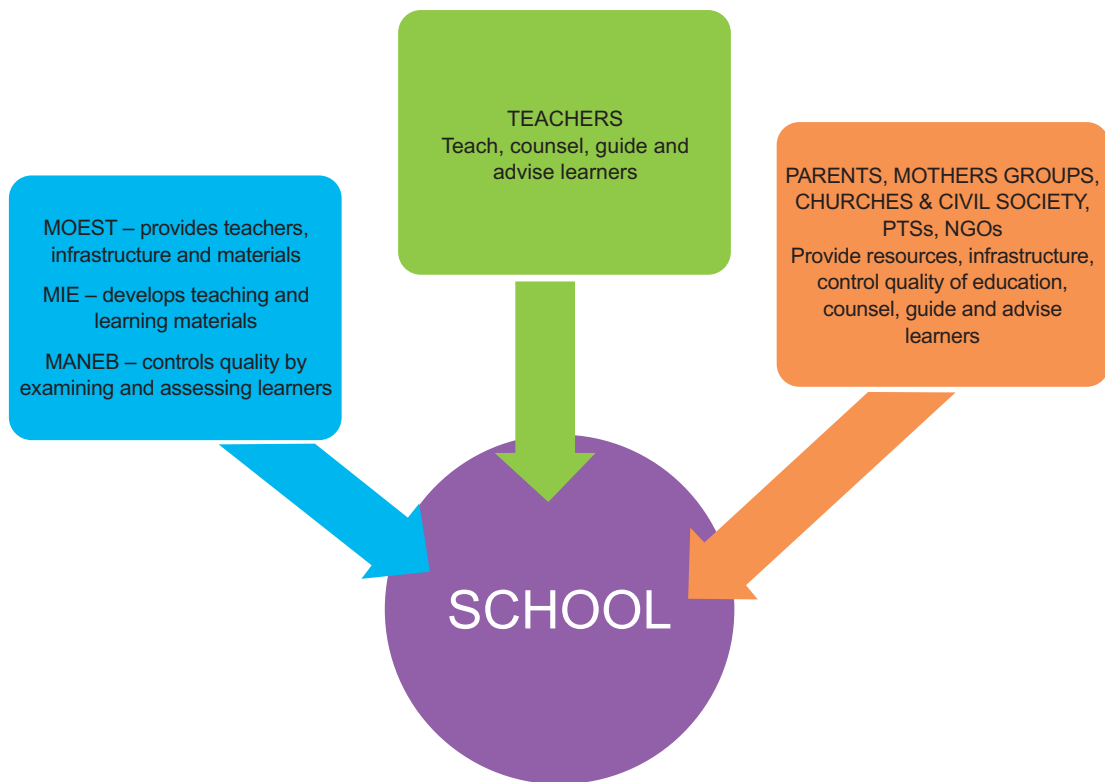
Every school is surrounded by a community and it is very important that the school maintains a good relationship with it. Apart from the immediate community, there are also other stakeholders that play different roles at the school. These include government as well as non governmental institutions.

Practical activity 2:

Do this activity with another Teaching Assistant if you can.

Study the chart on the next page and answer the questions that follow. Ask your Mentor to explain any words you do not understand.

1. Give two differences between the roles of any two stakeholders.
2. Give two similarities between the roles of some stakeholders.
3. Who are the stakeholders around the school where you help? How does the involvement of stakeholders affect teaching and learning in the school?



Study reading 2: Mothers Groups

Mothers Groups are one of many possible stakeholders around a school. Sometimes they are part of the PTA. Mothers Groups are often involved in literacy work with women. Being illiterate is a major factor in limiting women and girls' capacity to improve conditions in their homes, families and communities. It has also prevented their full participation in community affairs and administration. Numeracy skills are also important. Women who join a Mothers Group say their biggest priorities are to not be cheated at the market, keeping basic accounts, understanding what medicine to give to children and how often to give it, and to read instructions on goods.

Mothers Groups help women to form small businesses such as a small bakery, a small farm or a tuck shop. Mothers Groups may be involved in health promotion and sanitation work with women. Mothers Groups also encourage girls to stay in school, help care for orphans and support females with HIV. Although many women have not had an education, they still have a valuable wealth of knowledge and experience to share with others. They use their skills and confidence to work together to improve the conditions of their daily lives. Here are some comments from women who have benefitted from Mothers Groups:

At first when I became sick and went to the hospital I couldn't read the prescription. Whenever I received a letter I could not read it. Now I can read and write. I am able to read the bible. I can do all of this after one year of joining a group. I now understand the calendar, the years of birth of my children and days of the week. I can also give the right change.

Agnes, Nchitsi District Mothers Group

We used not to send our girls to school. We encouraged the boys because we believed that girls were meant for marriage. This attitude is now changing. I am now aware that girls are very valuable.

Susan, Chawangangwa Mothers Group

My family has improved. I take my five children to the clinic. I can read and follow the immunisation chart and monitor my children's weight which is recorded on the chart. I know when the next visit to the clinic is due.

Vitumbiko, Ndirange Makata Mothers Group

How do you think Mothers Groups can act as role models to girls in your community?

Practical activity 3:

In the readings above, women said their learning priorities were to become literate and numerate, so they could read information, do basic accounts and not be cheated.

What do you think are the learning priorities for women in the community around the school where you help?

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What do you think are the priorities for girls in the classroom where you help?

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Real life example: a Mothers Group gets a new member

Manesi saw her world come to a crashing end when her mother died. Aged only 14, her father had died a few years earlier.

"I was in Standard 8 at Mfera Primary School when my mother died. I had no one to support me and people told me the only way out of my misery was to get married," she says.

A man came along, promising her marriage. A pregnancy resulted but the man ran away and left Manesi, at only 15, with the difficult task of raising a baby by herself.

The next man who promised marriage became the father of her second child. He also ran away, leaving Manesi with two children to care for. She was 18 years old.

Now aged 25, Manesi counsels young girls to avoid early sexual relations. She belongs to a Mothers Group which provides counselling and support

to girls at Mfera Primary School. The group holds counselling sessions with upper class girls twice a month. So far, it has succeeded in bringing back 18 girls who left school to engage in maize vending.

“We have realized that girls drop out of school for many reasons,” she says. “Mostly, it is because they come from poor, hungry families where they are forced into vending commodities in order to supplement household income.”

Manesi also cites the lack of toilet facilities at the school to cater for girls and entertainment houses around the school which allow under-age girls to indulge in alcohol, dance, and video shows.

The Mothers Group has recruited the village chief to their cause. Being a mother herself and an authority figure, the chief has been able to persuade owners of entertainment houses not to allow underage children.

For Manesi, her motivation is not too far from home. “I have many regrets about the way my life turned out,” she says. “However I cannot change history. All I can do is to try and help young girls from following in my footsteps.”

Practical activity 4:

Is there a Mothers Group near you or the school? If yes, try to meet with them to learn more about their work. Write below some of the things the Mothers Group does.

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If no, ask your Mentor and Headteacher about the possibility of forming such a group. You are not expected to lead this, but maybe the Headteacher would think about it. Even if this can not happen, think about how a Mothers' Group could help the school. **YOU** can write some of your thoughts below.

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Remember to
write in the
School Experience Diary.

What did I do
this week?

Review

You have kept a record of what you do in lessons to help the teacher and the learners. This is important information and good evidence of your contributions to learning and to the school.

Make time to ask your teacher and your Mentor for feedback on your support in the classroom. Are there other ways of working you would like to try out?

Make a note of these here.

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Teaching Assistant’s report and self-assessment

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Remember to discuss with your Mentor and other Teaching Assistants how you are all acting as role models for girls in school.

Mentor comments and evaluation

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

Try to include your thoughts and reflections on how you are acting as a role model to the Teaching Assistants, to the other teachers and to the girls in your school.

Mentor's signature

Date:

Head Teacher's signature:

Date:

Unit 4: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's: Contributing to assessment and record keeping; and guidance and counselling for girls

In Unit 4, Teaching Assistants consider their role in contributing to assessment and keeping records on learners' progress to support the teacher, and aspects of guidance and counselling for girls in Standards 7 and 8.

In this unit it is important that the Teaching Assistant, and the teacher she works with, understand that the Scholar can only have a supporting role in assessment which can take a number of forms as indicated in the Teaching Assistants' resources. In order to support this aspect of the Teaching Assistant's contribution to assessment, the unit asks her to initially identify the types of assessment the teacher uses, and then to discuss with you, her Mentor, or the teacher how she can help the teacher in different assessment and record keeping tasks.

In your role as Mentor, you can discuss different ways in which the Teaching Assistants could support the teacher in assessment tasks. You might need to clarify the support role of the Teaching Assistant to the teacher she works with and remind her that the Scholar is not in a position to assess learners without guidelines from the teacher. Your experience of using different types of assessment and record keeping throughout your career as a teacher will also help you to have these discussions with the Scholar and the teacher she works with.

The second aspect Scholars are looking at in this unit is counselling and guidance for girls in Standards 7 and 8. Many learners in Standards 7 and 8 might have already approached Scholars to get advice or counselling from them on personal matters. It is important that Scholars understand that guidance and counselling do not mean telling learners what to do, but listening carefully and offering possible solutions to them. This is similar to the role you have as a Mentor, where you provide advice, suggestions and guidance to the Scholars for their role as Teaching Assistants based on your experience as a teacher.

When you discuss the skills the Scholar has to guide and counsel girls, you might want to do the same exercise yourself to reflect on the skills you possess which are helping you in your role as a Mentor in the KGIS programme.

Remember to go over the School Experience Diary with the Teaching Assistant to discuss the range of activities she is doing each week.

Unit 4: Contributing to assessment and record keeping

Classroom focus: Contributing to assessment and record keeping

Classroom project: Guidance and counselling for girls

When you complete this unit you will have developed:

- Knowledge of continuous assessment
- Skills in contributing to learner assessment
- Understanding of the value of guidance and counselling for girls

In this unit you will read the following terms:

Continuous Assessment: evaluating student performance over time, not just giving one examination at the end of study

Monitoring: checking progress

Timing

You have approximately two weeks to complete the readings and practical activities in this unit. Skim read the unit now, so that you can plan your time well.

Study reading 1: Contributing to assessment

When you help in the classroom, you are well placed to observe learners and report to the teacher about their progress. The teacher will keep records on learners' achievements and progress. In a large class with many learners, this record-keeping can be time consuming. Teaching Assistants often contribute to assessment records for the teacher.

You can observe and keep a record of:

- individual learners working on their own
- individual learners working as part of a group
- groups of learners working together

You can keep track of scores they achieve on tests, words they can read and spell, and number work they can do accurately.

You can make notes on learners' skills and behaviours, for example:

- social and emotional skills, how they relate to others
- language and communication skills, how they use and understand language structures and vocabulary
- intellectual skills, how they work in different subject learning areas
- physical abilities and skills

The teacher may ask learners to do something that you can observe and report back to the teacher about, for example:

- following written instructions
- formal tests
- following verbal instructions such "measure the height of the cupboard"

Remember to write in the School Experience Diary.

What did I do this week?

You can mark learners’ work using the teacher’s mark guide, and review learners’ work with them so they can see their successes and errors.

Observing, keeping records and monitoring learners are part of Continuous Assessment. Continuous Assessment can be more informal than examinations and tests. It can involve notes and observations, and talking to learners to see what they understand. It can be used to provide feedback to learners and guide their future learning.

Practical activity 1:

What kinds of assessment records does the teacher keep? List them here:

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During this unit, look for examples of assessment in the classroom. Use the table below to keep a record.

Type of assessment	Lesson and activity

Talk to your teacher and your Mentor about how you can contribute to the teacher’s assessment of learners. Write down the outcome of this discussion.

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Study reading 2: Guidance and counselling for girls

In traditional societies like Malawi, giving care to those that needed it was a basic function of the family. The needs—whether emotional or physical—of all family members were met within the extended family. The older members counselled the younger ones and the younger ones sought advice from the elders. Sharing thoughts and activities with a large family was the accepted norm.

In recent times, social and economic changes have brought changes in the structure of the family. More people have left their communities to seek employment, making extended families less common. More children than ever before are orphans, having lost one or both parents to HIV and AIDS, war, sickness, accidents, or poverty. There are many problems facing learners, who may need support and guidance to find the right way.

Guidance should help someone make changes that are positive and take steps towards goals. Guidance and counselling are not telling learners exactly what they must do. Guidance and counselling involve listening carefully to what learners say, making sure you understand their problems, and offering possible solutions to help them. There are different types of guidance one can provide to learners:

Educational Guidance helps learners stay in school, study hard and make good choices for their future.

Vocational Guidance helps learners choose an occupation and prepare for the world of work.

Personal and Social Guidance helps learners know how to behave with consideration towards other people, how to get along well with others, develop good relationships, and understand social roles and responsibilities.

In the school, when you talk to learners, you may provide these different types of guidance from time to time. In Unit 3 you read about Mothers Groups and how they work as stakeholders in and outside schools. Mothers Groups have a role in guiding and counselling girls. They have an important role in the Life Skills Curriculum.

Read the stories below about their work to improve the educational chances of girls.

Older members of the community often act as role models when they offer younger ones counselling and guidance. Try to speak with older members of your community or family to learn from them.

Lefa returns to Standard 7

Lefa had given up on her education because of family circumstances. “My mother went to live in Blantyre with her new husband,” she says. The mother left Lefa and her two siblings to fend for themselves. Their father had died and they had no extended family in the neighbourhood who traditionally would have supported them. So instead of an education, Lefa focused on earning money to survive by carrying out domestic chores like fetching water and cultivating plots. Her situation was typical of many girls in Malawi. A month after she dropped out of school, Lefa received a visit from a member of the school's Mothers Group, who persuaded her to return to school. Lefa, who loved school, is now in Standard 7.

Lefa's problems are not over. "We can eat only once a day after school," says Lefa, who is extremely thin. They eat nsima and pumpkin leaves. "I feel hungry in class and when I go to bed. We don't have school uniforms and no shoes, and I have to share my friend's pen," she says. Her mother came for a brief visit six months ago, but the person who checks up on Lefa regularly is from the Mothers Group. "She visits me and my sister and brother twice a week. She sees what problems I have and gives us soap when we need it," says Lefa.

The Mothers Group has persuaded 15 girls to return to school. Some girls dropped out to get married or because they are pregnant, but most left so that they can earn money for food. The Mothers Group also started a school feeding programme to keep children in school and asked the community to contribute to this.

Jennifer reaches out to other girls

Fourteen-year-old Jennifer is a peer educator and outreach worker who does similar work to the women in a Mothers Group, except she has the advantage of being able to communicate more easily with school-age girls, being one herself. "I can visit friends who have dropped out of school, and help them return to school." She uses the example of her friend Theresa. "She comes from a poor family, so her mother made her drop out of school to work in homes of other families. We talked first to her mother and then to Theresa. After a while, her mother agreed that she would work extra hours so she could afford to let her daughter return to school."

Lexa returns to Standard 8

Nineteen-year-old Lexa left school because she was pregnant. "I was in Standard 8. I felt that it was the end of my schooling. Before I became pregnant, I had wanted to be a nurse." A peer educator told Lexa that she still had a place at the school. She returned to Standard 8 while her grandmother looked after her baby. Lexa worries about her future because life has become a struggle since her parents had died. But Lexa is not alone. At least 83 pupils at the school have lost at least one of their parents, many due to AIDS.

Catherine comes back to school and advises girls

Catherine became accidentally pregnant at the age of 14. She dropped out of school and married the father. From that moment, her life became a nightmare. Her husband beat her on a daily basis. Sometimes he would not give her any food to eat for two to three days.

A group of mothers from the community of Jombo found out about Catherine's situation. The volunteers, who meet twice a week to encourage girls to return to school, managed to talk to Catherine separately from her husband. They encouraged her to return to school. She then decided to end her marriage.

Once in class, she was taught during Life Skills lessons that violence is not acceptable.

Catherine is now doing quite well in school, and dreams of becoming a nurse. One of the challenges she faces in class is that the other children often laugh at her, saying "You are a mother, not a girl!" Catherine tells them that she got married not by wish or plan, but accidentally, when she became pregnant. "Now I advise the other girls not to do what I did," says Catherine. "I made a mistake, and now know what this marriage was like. The other girls should not do as I did but should stay in school. Today, I am very grateful I was given a second chance to continue with my education."

Practical activity 2:

Think about your own experiences of guidance and counselling. Talk to your Mentor or another Teaching Assistant of a situation where you received guidance or counsel from someone else. What was the most valuable aspect of this to you?

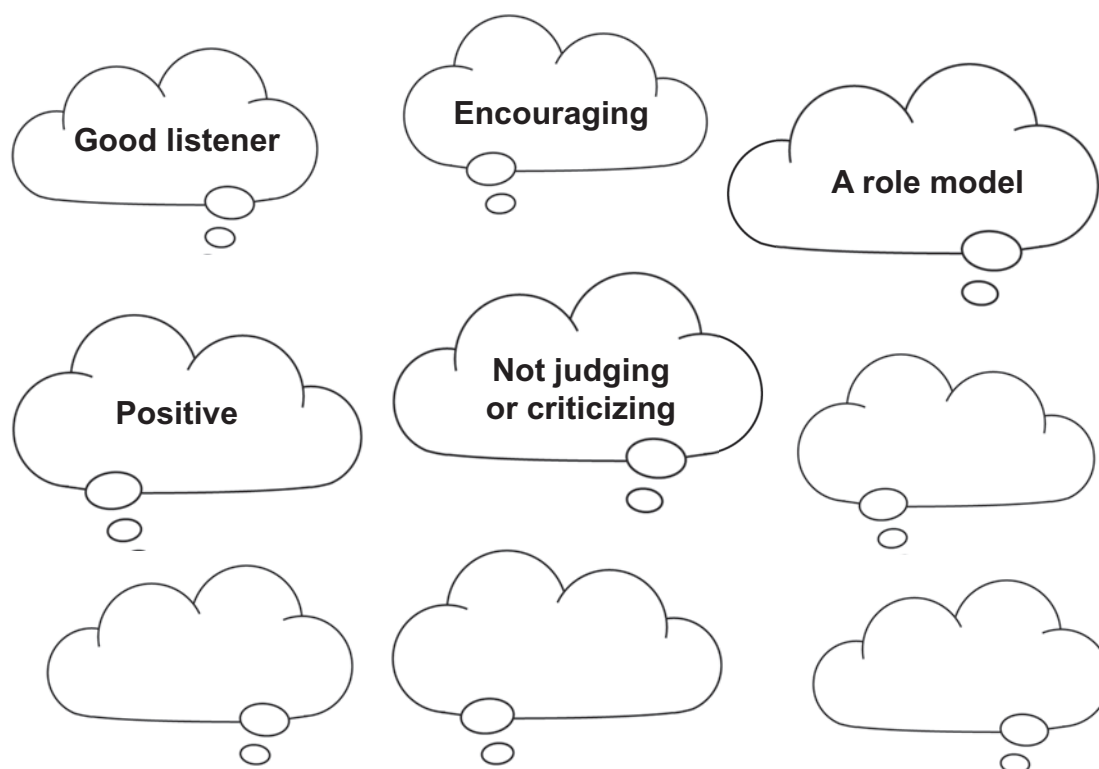
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Think about your own capacity to guide and counsel girls. What skills do you have for helping girls to make good choices? We have suggested some of the necessary skills, and you will be able to think of others. Discuss this with your Mentor in your next meeting.



Remember to write in the School Experience Diary.

What did I do this week?

Review

You have kept a record of what you do in lessons to help the teacher and the learners. This is important information and good evidence of your contributions to learning and to the school.

Make time to ask your teacher and your Mentor for feedback on your support in the classroom. Are there other ways of working you would like to try out?

Make a note of these here.

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Teaching Assistant’s report and self-assessment

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Remember to include an example of how you have been a positive role model to a girl in your class.

Unit 5: Mentor's Introduction and Teaching Assistant's: Finish and review

This last unit in Theme 5 is similar to the last unit in the previous Theme where the Teaching Assistant focuses on reviewing her progress during this term in her role in supporting the learners and the teacher in the Standard 7 or 8 class. At the same time, this unit also gives you the opportunity to review your development as a Mentor supporting the Scholar in the KGIS programme

The Teaching Assistant is initially asked to return to activities or readings she has not been able to complete during the term. She also has the opportunity to reflect on the achievements and challenges she has encountered during this term. At the end of the unit she is asked to review the personal goals she set herself in the previous Theme and to reflect on what she needs to do over the next term to ensure that she achieves all her goals by the end of her School Experience Year 2 and her involvement in the KGIS programme.

As a Mentor, you should also take some time to reflect on how your role as a Mentor in the KGIS programme is impacting on your own teaching and on your own personal and professional development as a teacher in Malawi.

Unit 5: Finish and review

Theme 5 has been about social issues in education. When you support learning in the primary school, you do more than help with academic subjects. You can also be aware of cross cutting issues that affect learning, and the skills that learners need to succeed in life. This awareness will help you to guide and counsel learners in an appropriate way.

Timing

You have approximately two weeks for this unit.

You have time to finish anything you were not able to complete in Units 1 to 4, as well to evaluate your learning and progress in Theme 5.

Review your School Diary and add any other tasks you have done and any thoughts you have about School Experience.

Practical activity 1:

Do this with another Teaching Assistant, or with your Mentor if she/he has time.

Think back to the readings of this unit.

Write your ideas in the table.

If your teacher agrees, you could have learners do this as a debate activity in the classroom.

Advantages of being educated	Disadvantages of being educated

When you wrote in the table, you probably found that there are many advantages to being educated and very few disadvantages. If you know any girls who are discouraged in school, talk to them about the many advantages of education.



Practical activity 2:

Go back to Units 1 – 4 and find any activities or readings you need to finish.

Make an action plan: list the tasks and the dates you will complete them

	Task to complete	Date for completion
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Practical activity 3:

In the spaces below, evaluate your learning in Theme 5. For each area, write one or two of most important points – the key points – of your learning.

Before you write, talk with your Mentor – and maybe your teacher and head teacher – about each point.

What I have learned about

The Life Skills Curriculum and Cross Cutting Issues in Education

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Attitudes to learning

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Making books

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Differentiated learning activities

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Mothers Groups

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Contributing to assessment

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Guidance and counselling for girls

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Remember to
write in the
School Experience
Diary.

What did I do
this week?

Reviewing my personal goals for Year 2

In Theme 4 Unit 5 you set yourself 5 personal goals you would like to achieve by the end of this second year of School Experience.

Go back to these goals, and think about what you have achieved so far. Write this in the middle column in the table below.

If you have not achieved a goal, think about what you still need to do to achieve these goals by the end of next term when your time as a KGIS Scholar comes to an end. Write this in the last column.

You will have time to discuss this with your Mentor at the meeting you have with her/him at the end of this term.

	My goals for Year 2 in the KGIS programme (From Theme 4 Unit 5)	What I have achieved so far	What I still need to work on
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2			
3			
4			
5			

Scholar’s report and self assessment report

My key achievements in Theme 5:

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My key challenges

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Mentor comments and evaluation

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Well done on completing Theme 5 of School Experience Year 2.

Reviewing your personal goals for Year 2 as a Mentor

In Theme 4 Unit 5, you set yourself 5 goals for this second year as a Mentor in the Keeping Girls in School programme. We would like you to go back to these and reflect on what you have achieved so far and what you still need to work on in the final term of this year. Write your thoughts in the table below. You might want to discuss these with your Head Teacher when you meet him/her next.

	My goals for Year 2 of the KGIS programme	What I have achieved so far	What I still need to work on
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Mentor 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 notebook paper. It features multiple sets of horizontal lines across the entire page. Each set consists of three lines: a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line. These sets are repeated vertically down the page, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The background is white, and the lines are printed in a light blue color. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Mentor's signature

Date:

Head Teacher's signature:

Date:



The Open
University



Keeping Girls in School scholarship programme
Funded by UKaid from the UK government