Getting one step ahead in life
A study of an adult literacy programme in Northern Malawi

HANNA APPELQUIST
THERÉSE BJÖRKMAN

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Title: Getting one step ahead in life
A study of an adult literacy programme in Northern Malawi

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En studie av ett läsutvecklingsprogram för vuxna i norra Malawi

Authors: Hanna Appelquist and Therése Björkman

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Abstract: The aim of this Bachelor thesis is to study the connection between literacy and development and poverty reduction in a third world country. The study is based on Mothers’ Union Literacy and Development Programme (MULDP) in Malawi, where it examines what difference literacy makes in the learners of MULDP’s lives and what meaning literacy has for them.

The results found in the study are analysed with a theoretical framework that is built on Freire’s theory of ‘conscientization’ and the concepts of functional literacy and functional illiteracy. The method chosen is unstructured focus group interviews with the learners of MULDP and the findings were classified into themes through meanings condensation and thereafter compared with the theoretical framework.

The results show that the effects of literacy are visual in both the personal and public sphere, changing the lives of the individual, the family and the community. The findings illustrate that literacy is both a tool and a social practice. Literacy itself does not develop the learners; it is the knowledge that comes with the social practice that is the trigger to development.

This study concludes that literacy is developing the learners as human beings. A connection can, however, not be made between literacy and poverty reduction; literacy cannot on its own take the learners out of poverty because other means are also needed.

Key words: Literacy, Development, Malawi, Poverty reduction, MFS

Nyckelord: Läs- och skrivkunnighet, Läsutveckling, Malawi, MFS, Fattigdomsbekämpning
# Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFS</td>
<td>Minor Field Study</td>
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<td>MU</td>
<td>Mothers’ Union</td>
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<td>MULDP</td>
<td>Mothers’ Union Literacy and Development Programme</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>REFLECT</td>
<td>Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques</td>
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<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
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1. Introduction

This bachelor thesis is about literacy in the context of Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world. This thesis is also a Minor Field Study (MFS), financed through a scholarship from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). This scholarship made it possible for us to spend two months in Malawi to study a literacy programme in its genuine environment.

It was our curiosity about the world and different cultures that led us to conduct an MFS. It was, however, our interest in reading and literacy that took us to Malawi. We wanted to find out what difference literacy can make for poor people in a third world country. Many government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that run adult literacy programmes make close connections between literacy, poverty reduction and development in their policies. We wondered how much truth that was lying within these connections and if literacy really is the key to development, as some authors proclaim.

Literacy as a concept is very vague and has many purposes. The way we view literacy in Sweden is not the same way they view it in Malawi, literacy is affected by, for example, different people and different cultures. Without fully knowing the context of literacy’s surroundings the diversity of it makes it difficult to study the effects that literacy has had on certain programmes. The different ways of viewing literacy also makes it difficult to compare results from studies of different programmes, something that can obstruct research.

Malawi’s definition of literacy is, according to UNESCO, “[t]he ability of an individual to read and write a simple statement in Chichewa, English or any other language” (Literacy For Life 2005, p. 269). The programme that we have studied; Mothers’ Union Literacy and Development Programme (MULDP), uses a method called REFLECT\(^1\) whose focus is to make the learners literate by using materials close to the learners’ every-day lives. This makes the learners literate in another way. Our thesis has a user perspective and we wanted to focus on how the learners of the programme viewed literacy and how they experienced the effects that the programme has made in their lives.

We believe that this bachelor thesis can contribute to an understanding of how literacy can change the lives of learners in literacy programmes and thereafter for the society they live in. We also believe that this is relevant knowledge in the field of Library and Information Science. Librarians have, according to us, a responsibility to promote reading and writing, in other words literacy. A lot of knowledge in the world is stored in written format and literacy is required to be able to retrieve this knowledge. As librarians we need to know how literacy can be understood in different parts of the world, especially in today’s multicultural societies, so that we can meet the needs of different groups of users at the library.

\(^1\) Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
1.1 Aim and research questions

This thesis aim to understand how literacy in a Malawian context stands in connection to poverty reduction and development since this connection is something that is mentioned in many governments and NGOs policies. By getting an insight of how learners of MULDP view literacy, this thesis intends to understand the complexity of the concept literacy. The thesis also aims to survey what effects literacy has had on the learners of MULDP.

To examine the aim, focus is on the following research questions:
• In what ways do the learners in MULDP view literacy?
• What does it mean for the learners to be literate?
• What effects has MULDP had in the learners’ lives, according to the learners?

1.2 Disposition

This thesis begins with an introduction to why we have chosen to lay focus on literacy. The chapter then presents the aim and research questions and in the end describe the disposition of the thesis.

Chapter 2 lay out the settings of the thesis, giving the reader an understanding of the contexts of Malawi and the Mothers’ Union. Chapter 3 sums some of the previous research concerning literacy, literacy development and literacy as a life changing phenomenon. Chapter 4 lay out the foundations to the study by describing the theoretical framework based on Paolo Freire’s theory of ‘conscientization’ and the concepts functional literacy and functional illiteracy. Chapter 5 describes the used method, which were unstructured focus group interviews. The chapter also describes how the method was approached. Thereafter it describes the chosen analysis method and how the interviews were transcribed and analysed. The reliability and validity of the study are also discussed, and as a last section in this chapter research ethics that have been relevant for the study is problematized.

In chapter 6 the results of the study is presented, detailing important aspects found during the unstructured focus group interviews and in the same chapter the results are analysed by comparing it to the theoretical framework. Chapter 7 discuss the result and analyse by comparing it to chosen earlier research and chapter 8 presents conclusions drawn based on the aim and research questions.
2. Settings

In this section the foundations of the field study; Malawi, MU and MULDP, are described.

2.1 Malawi

Malawi is one of the smallest countries in Africa. The country is landlocked between Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, right by one of the biggest lakes of the world, Lake Malawi. (Briggs 2010, p. 3) Malawi took its modern shape 1907 as Nyasaland (ibid, p. 4), a colony belonging to the UK and was established as an independent country in 1964 (ibid, p. 11).

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in world, ranked as number 160 of 182 countries by UNDPs Human Development Report 2009 (2009, p. 145). One of the major reasons for the country’s poverty is its population growth. 2007 Malawi had around 14,4 million inhabitants (ibid, p. 193) but because of the fertility rate of 5,6 births per woman (ibid. p. 193) the country is estimated to have over 41 million inhabitants year 2040. (Chipalasa 2010, p. 3) Other reasons that are effecting the poverty are, for example; lack of education; lack of knowledge about the agricultural issues and lack of knowledge of common diseases, for example HIV/AIDS and malaria. (CIA 2010)

In Malawi there are as many as 40 different local languages, that all are classified as Bantu languages (Briggs 2010, p. 303). This linguistic group has its origin in west-Africa and almost all languages spoken in sub-equatorial Africa belongs to this family. Many in Africa can therefore understand each other (ibid, p. 303), to some extent. The national language of Malawi is called Chichewa, and in the northern region of Malawi Tumbuka and Tonga are the most common languages.

The fact that Malawi territorially belonged to the UK are still visible in the country, especially by the fact that English still is one of the main languages, used in the banking system and in official papers.

2.1.1 Education and literacy in Malawi

Malawi’s Northern Province once had the highest education standard in Central Africa and Likoma Island had a literacy level at 100 percent as the only area at the continent, all because of the Scottish missionaries that offered education to thousands of Africans. (Briggs 2010, p. 10) This is, however, history and far from the truth today.

It is estimated that 71,8 percent of the Malawians were literate in 2007. (Human Development Report 2009, p. 173) This to be compared to 2004 when the literacy rate was at 64,1 percent. (Literacy for Life 2005, p. 286) Important to notice is the difference between men and women. While the literacy rate among men are 79,2 percent, only

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2 Also referred to as Lake Nyasa
3 which is estimated to have infected around twelve percent of the population
64.6 percent of the women are literate. (*Human Development Report* 2009, p. 183) The validity and comparability are, however, depending on the countries’ definition of literacy and on the selection of individuals in surveys. (*Literacy for life* 2005, pp. 162-163)

There is one big problem concerning illiteracy and it is lack of education at an early stage. Malawi’s primary school is mandatory and consists of eight levels. 1994 the primary school became free of charge and schools all over the country suddenly had over one million more pupils. This has led to lack of classrooms, school materials and teachers. Of those who begin primary school, 58 percent finish it. (Landguiden 2010) We have been told⁴ that in the early school years there are often more girls than boys attending classes, but after some years it often starts to develop a gap between the genders were the boys are overly represented. This is supposed to be because girls are taken out of school to get married, have children or to help in the household. Other reason for children to be taken out of school is the cost of school books and that many children have to work to gain money to the family’s livelihood.

### 2.2 Mothers’ Union and MULDP

Mothers’ Union is an international NGO that is a part of the Anglican Church. MU has its head office in London, UK, but has members in over 78 countries all over the world. The organisation’s aim is “to bring about a world where God’s love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships” (The Mothers’ Union 2010:1). They want to accomplish their goal with help from prayer, programmes, and policy work and community relationships. MU writes that they “lobby local and national governments on issues affecting family life and campaign to challenge legislation that neglects the vulnerable and marginalised”. (ibid)

Among other things, MU is running literacy programmes (MULDP) in Malawi, Sudan and Burundi. The project has been up and running since the year 2000. (The Mothers’ Union 2010:2) MULDP is a project with the aim to raise literacy levels and numeracy levels in African countries to improve the population’s living standard. (ibid)

MULDP is using a method which is called REFLECT. REFLECT is a method that does not follow traditional text-books, this to enable the concept to be adaptable in any language area. The idea of teaching is instead centred on subjects that are of interest for the learners. (Mvuma 2008, p. 7) MULDP uses literacy circles to discuss issues important for the participants.

MULDP works closely with the dioceses of the Anglican Church. Each diocese has their own MULDP trainers, who are training and instructing facilitators and providing them, with guidance and material. The facilitators’ role in MULDP is to be teachers, instructors and guiders to the learners.

The circles are arranged in the villages on places provided by the community, which could be in a church, in a classroom, in someone’s living room, in an old stable or under a tree. The circles meet once or twice a week, each lesson last two hours. The learners

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⁴ By a member of the education office at the Anglican Diocese of Northern Malawi
are first taught about the alphabet through blackboards and notebooks. When they have learnt to read on a basic level, they are given text books, which they take home and read. Later they discuss the content and come to their own conclusions about different subjects.

When the learners are assumed to be literate, they take exams. If they pass, they become accredited literate. They then continue to meet and work together; discussing and engaging in a number of different post-literacy activities, to ensure that literacy and numeracy skills are continually developed. With this method MU hopes to give the whole community knowledge which they can work with, both by the learners themselves and together as a group. (The Mothers’ Union 2010:2)
3. Previous research

This chapter presents some of the previous research concerning literacy, literacy development and literacy as a life changing phenomenon which are connected to the aim and research questions of this thesis.

3.1 Views of literacy

Literacy might seem like a concept that everyone understands and agrees about, but literacy is a diverse word which is defined different in different parts of the world. As mentioned in chapter 1, Malawi’s definition of Literacy is “[t]he ability of an individual to read and write a simple statement in Chichewa, English or any other language” (Literacy For Life 2005, p. 269). SIDA, on the other hand, states that “Literacy is about learning to read and write (text and numbers) and also about reading, writing and counting to learn, and developing these skills and using them effectively for meeting basic needs” (ibid, p. 158). These different ways of viewing literacy is important to have in mind when researching literacy. Not because it enlightens the views of literacy on a basic level, the way it is understood by different persons in the world, but because it makes the concept abstract and questionable. To understand the meanings and views of literacy a more concrete view is needed.

It is possible to define at least two different viewpoints of the importance of literacy in the studied literature. Francis Kachala, a Malawian library assistant, writes in Developing a reading culture among the rural masses of Mwambo, Zomba District, Malawi: a concept for the 21st Century and beyond5 that “[t]he reading culture is the base to greater passion of every individual’s inner self” (2007, p. 6) and that “literacy is the key to development” (ibid, p. 8). Kachala express that those who are literate are more likely to use modern farming methods, follow family planning methods and being active in the community development. (ibid, p. 8) This enlightens the fact that literacy is equal with development.

Brian Street, a professor of language in education at King’s College London, argues in Literacy Empowerment in Developing Societies that literacy is not the key to development, as Kachala puts it, but rather a part of the development. He argues that there has been too much focus on literacy as empowering, meaning that participants of different literacy projects might become literate but not powerful. (2001, p. 291) The assumed link between literacy and empowerment varies in each cultural context, and according to Street, it is important to distinguish that literacy is not just a technique, rather a social practice that varies between contexts and is a part of cultural knowledge and behaviour (ibid, p. 293). Street argues that many literacy projects fail because they teach the technique without bothering about the social contexts. When running a literacy programme, it is important to be aware of the context in which people creates their identities. (ibid, p. 293) Street expresses the complexity of literacy by stating that:

[y]ou may learn to read the high literacy texts of a culture or you may learn to read the functional texts in which agency messages are inscribed, but in both cases the reading alone and the knowledge

5 A paper at the 73rd IFLA general conference
associated with that reading do not lead to empowerment, unless one
also has the ability to transform that knowledge into a currency that is
powerful in that social context. (ibid, p. 296)

It is so to say the social activity that leads to empowerment, not the literacy itself,
something that may question the connection between literacy and development and
poverty reduction.

Amartya Sen, professor in economics and philosophy and winner of the Nobel Prize in
Economics, argues in *Reflections of literacy* that literacy at a first sight can be hard to
relate to female empowerment. Sen states that what many literacy projects have in
common is that they contribute to a positive way of viewing women’s voices, and
therefore creates a greater independence and empowerment of women. (2003, p. 27)

Sen and Street are in their arguments showing similar views of literacy, illustrating
that literacy is needed to develop, but that it is the knowledge that cannot be retrieved when
illiterate, that is changing and developing the lives of people in development countries.

### 3.2 Literacy development

Kachala expresses in his paper that the lack of a reading culture in Malawi has been a
persistent sore in the eyes of many organisations. He writes that this is the reason why
many organisations manifest “that it is only a literate and knowledgeable society that
can fully participate in and positively contribute to national development”. (Kachala
2007, p. 5) According to Kachala, this means that about 33 percent of the rural adult
population in Malawi have limited involvement in economic development in their areas
(ibid, p. 5). Kachala’s statements clearly enlighten the connection between literacy and
development, and describe reasons why this connection is something that occurs in
many policies.

Benedicta Egbo, Ph.D. in Educational Administration at the University of Toronto,
is trying to explain the connection between literacy and development in her book *Gender,
literacy and life chances in Sub-Saharan Africa*. She argues that “the main logic behind
mass literacy campaigns by national governments and international development
agencies is that literacy would improve individual quality of life by increasing life
options, as well as overall societal progress.” (Egbo 2000, p. 27) Egbo acknowledges
that international agencies and national government base their literacy policies for third
world countries on the argument that “universal literacy can accelerate national
development and reduce the dependency of emerging economics on Western economics
organs” (ibid, p. 36). They do this because they share the view that literacy and poverty
are linked together, and that increased literacy levels means reducing the problems of
poverty. (ibid, pp. 35-36) Egbo argues that this connection can be questionable because
there are no signs that increased literacy levels have lead to economic wealth in, for
example, Africa. She, however, argues that “universal literacy is a useful tool for social
and economic development”. (ibid, p. 36)

Street argues that literacy projects often exist in addition to the participants’ every-day
lives, and that the project often is unfamiliar to the local culture (1984, p. 194). He

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6 For his contributions on work of welfare economics, rewarded 1998
means that this becomes complicated since “literacy is a matter of culture and ideology and that people will only adapt it if they are sympathetic to, and see the relevance of, the particular culture and ideology that shapes it” (ibid, pp. 194-195). Reader Development and Reading Promotion: Recent Experiences from Seven Countries in Africa (Rosenberg 2003) is summing up experiences from several literacy programmes in South Africa, Nigeria, Tanzania and other countries that, like Malawi, are affected by illiteracy. The overall conclusion is that the taught knowledge needs to be of interest for the community. Especially one of the projects is pointing towards the fact that material needs to be found in local and preferably mother-tongue languages. (ibid, p. 58)

Dr. Agneta Lind, specialist in adult literacy, gives her own opinions about literacy in the paper Literacy programmes for adults: What can we expect? Lind argues that it does not work to integrate both practical skills and literacy into one programme (2008:2, p. 755). She is therefore critical to programmes that use the REFLECT method7, and argues that a problem with REFLECT is its non-formal format, another one is that it is teaching community development skills. Lind argues that the learners want books and they wish to learn skills as quick as possible. According to Lind, the learners tend to abandon REFLECT classes for more formal classes if they have the possibility to do so. (ibid, p. 760)

### 3.3 Literacy as life changing

In many countries access to literacy is associated with two types of life chances, something Egbo has examined. The first is that literate persons have more options for their future since they are educated and the second is that individuals creates bonds with each other when learning together as a group. (Egbo 2000, p. 26) Egbo argues that these two types of life chances “are critical to the empowerment of any group, particularly those that have historically been at the sidelines of their societies.” (ibid, p. 26) The arguments are useful in this study because of the context from which they are based, which is similar to the context of Malawi.

In Literacy for Life it is stated that literacy creates a lot of benefits. There are, for example, factors as “improved self-esteem, empowerment, creativity and critical reflection that participation in adult literacy programmes and the practice of literacy may produce”. (Literacy for Life 2005, p. 138) The report also states that literacy may empower learners “to take individual and collective action in various contexts, such as household, workplace and community” (ibid, p. 138). The effects of literacy programmes can, for example, make the learners “developers of their own knowledge” (ibid, p. 138). The own inner knowledge and development of the self-esteem are, so to say, something that is important for the development of the community and therefore for the poverty reduction.

When people are illiterate, Sen argues, their ability to affect their own lives with legal rights are very limited (2003, p. 24). It is a handicap not to be able to stand up for yourself and it should be addressed as one, according to Sen (ibid, p. 24). The same is stated in Literacy for Life, where it is written that those who cannot defend themselves often are the poorest and that they have significant disadvantages over those who are

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7 For example MULDP
literate and therefore can take action for themselves. (2005, p. 31) Literacy is not just a learning tool, but it is the heart of education. Education itself is a way of reducing poverty; reduce child mortality and ensuring sustainable development and other important aspects of poverty. (ibid, p. 31)

The literature argues that there are not only the people who take part of literacy programmes that take credit from it. Sen writes in Reflections of literacy that “[t]here is an old Bengali saying that knowledge is a very special commodity: the more you give away, the more you have left.” (2003, p. 21) This means, according to Sen, that education not only benefits the one getting education, but also those who are close to the one being educated. The ability to have knowledge and to be able to retrieve knowledge is an important issue, and the possible difference in a person’s life can be easy to see (ibid, p. 22). A really poor family will with just a little education retrieve so much, and their changes and new opportunities in life will be visible. (ibid, p. 22) For this thesis this is relevant to have in mind, things that poor people see as a great change might not be noticeable to those in the western world who takes it for granted.

Sarah Poff Roman writes in the paper Illiteracy and older adults: Individual and societal implications that there are certain aspects that are affecting illiterates to stay illiterate as well as to become literate, for example shame and frustration. Roman writes that this affects the illiterates on an individual level. Being illiterate can for example be shameful at their workplace and in any social situation. (Roman 2004, p. 85) Other aspects Roman mentions as influential on illiteracy are poverty, unemployment and health. Roman also writes that illiterate adults are very disadvantaged at workplaces and are seldom employed. (ibid, p. 85) Individual health is a daily task that is crucial for illiterates, according to Roman. Many illiterates struggle to stay healthy, and Roman writes that studies show that illiterate adults have poorer health. Roman explains this with the fact that illiterate adults for example cannot follow the guidelines of their medicines. (ibid, p. 86) Romans arguments show clearly that literacy and life changing for the better is related to each other and that literacy is important for both the physical and mental health.

Lind argues in the book Literacy for all: Making a difference that literacy and development is affecting each other and is dependent on each other. (2008:1, p. 66) Lind states that illiteracy goes hand-in-hand with poverty and that deficient nutrition, lack of water and electricity, early marriages, child labour, poor infrastructure and similar problems are all in some extent connected to illiteracy. With literacy these issues would at least have a chance to decrease. (ibid, p. 32) Lind, however, writes in Literacy programmes for adults: What can we expect? that literacy is not magic. It will not eliminate poverty; only help people to better cope with their lives. (Lind 2008:2, p. 759) She means that “[l]iteracy […] is a necessary tool and a life skill, as much as knowing how to make cement bricks, weave baskets, sew dresses or keep records.” (ibid, p. 755) The advantage with literacy, Lind argues, is that you do not need anything else to use it and it is valuable in every-day situations in all environments. To use any other technical skills you need money, tools, skills and material. (ibid, p. 755)

Aleya El Bindari-Hammad and Catherine Mulholland are in Functional Literacy, Health, and Quality of Life stating that it is widely accepted that literacy is affecting health, first of all because knowledge helps preventing diseases. (1991, p. 105) According to El Bindari-Hammad and Mulholland Education, education about health is
as essential as to learn how to count. “Knowledge of disease transmission, diet, and health problems that exist in one’s community is as important as history and should be accorded equal importance in school curricula.” (ibid, p. 109) Thomas Owen Eisemon, Jeanne Ratzlaff and Vimla L. Patel are writing about the necessity of being literate when facing medicine instructions. Their article Reading Instructions for Using Commercial Medicines is showing evidence for that better designed instructions, for example with images, would improve a safe and necessary use of the medicines. (Eisemon, Ratzlaff & Patel 1991, p. 80)

Not many have studied adult literacy at the University of Borås, especially not in the context of Africa, and none has made it in the context of Malawi. In an African context we have in the recent years seen studies on literacy in a child context. Maria Ronnäs has been in Zambia and studied reading and literacy and Anna Jönsson and Josefin Olsson have been studying the project “Children’s reading tent” in Uganda. These theses are showing that education and literacy is important and that education and literacy give children a chance to a future. Maria Ronnäs is in her master thesis Reading Promotion in Zambia - Lessons from Three Projects discussing and concluding that the “tool of literacy is essential to achieve a higher standard of education” and that the country needs educated people to further develop (2009, p. 62). She has seen that the projects sometimes works as a meeting place and is thus creating a place for development. (ibid, p. 62) This is an example from the reality where literacy is important and is effecting on a social level.

As a result of their master thesis Reading culture and literacy in Uganda: The case of the “Children’s Reading Tent”, Anna Jönsson and Josefin Olsson found out that their informants see literacy as something that is a part of everyone’s daily life and that literacy is a way of communicating. (2008, p. 80) Jönsson and Olsson acknowledged that learners, children in their case, need to learn from familiar subjects (ibid, p. 81), which varies from context to context. This means that literacy not only exists in an abstract world defined by academics, but among common people as well.
4. Theoretical framework

This chapter sums up the theoretical approach chosen for this study. The theoretical framework consists of two partly different ways of viewing literacy; Paolo Freire’s theory of ‘conscientization’ and functional literacy/illiteracy. The views are described below and the chapter ends with how the theoretical framework was used in this thesis.

4.1 Freire’s theory of ‘conscientization’

The Brazilian Paolo Freire has been an influential theorist of critical pedagogy. He created the theory of ‘conscientization’, or the pedagogy of the oppressed as it is also called, which is a theory about the relationship between liberation and education. Freire’s books with his ideas are very abstract so this thesis mostly uses Ronald David Glass’ interpretation of the theory, expressed in the essay On Paulo Freire’s Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberation Education. This thesis also uses other works concerning the theory of ‘conscientization’, for example, Silawal-Giri and Literacy for life. Glass, who is assistant professor in philosophy of education, writes that Freire’s theory has been applied on every continent by both basic literacy programmes and national educational policies. (2001, p. 15)

In Literacy for life it is written that Freire’s theory states “that social awareness and critical enquiry are key factors in social change” (2005, p. 154). The report sums up that important in the theory is that literacy must be more than the process of learning how to read, write and calculate. Literacy must “contribute to the ‘liberation of man’ and to his full development” (ibid, p. 154). Bharati Silawal-Giri, gender and development adviser at UNDP writes in Literacy, Education and Women’s Empowerment that another central part in Freire’s theory is a learning-teaching format where issues chosen by the women are discussed and analysed in developing alternatives (2003, p. 173). Silawal-Giri claims that poor women only will be motivated to join a literacy class if it can open a gateway out of their poverty and if it addresses subjects identified by the women themselves (ibid, p. 172), something that Freire was inspired by when creating his theory.

Freire’s theory is based around the term ‘conscientization’. According to Glass, Freire use the term to capture “the complex ontological, epistemological, and ethical-political features of education as a practice of freedom.” (Glass 2001, p. 19) Freire chose to use the term ‘conscientization’ since it is pointing at a special mode of life that always is in the process of becoming. He meant that “’[t]he more people become themselves, the better the democracy’” (ibid, p. 19). Freire’s theory states, according to Glass interpretation, that human nature alone is not able to produce “the good life”; it must be shaped and nurtured into forms that are the best and most successful for the community. (ibid, p. 17) Glass writes that Freire’s theory argues that with help from education, human life can rise from the level of instinct and basic survival needs to the level of existence (ibid, p. 17). It is stated that you cannot see individuals as simple human beings from a single context, historically, socially or cultural. Each individual is as a being that is creating its own future. (ibid, p. 17)
Glass distinguishes two kinds of knowledge in Freire’s theory; the everyday knowledge of experience, something Freire called “the common sense of the masses” and the systematic knowledge of science, in other words the “the trained sense of intellectuals”. (2001, p. 19) Glass writes that, according to Freire, none of these can alone provide a guarantee of truth; they are both needed for liberation. (ibid, p. 19) Freire called this critical knowledge or critical consciousness and it means that a person should be able to ask meaningful why and how questions to really be non-oppressed. (Freirian Dictionary 2010) Central to the critical knowledge, Glass sums up, are dialogues. Dialogues are characterized by open communication and participation of those around. (Glass 2001, p. 19)

Glass writes that education, as viewed with the pedagogy of the oppressed, is important so that the oppressed understand their situation and by that can understand concrete problems in their lives as well as be open for opportunities. (2001, p. 17) Human beings should see that life could be different and understand how and why life is not different. The oppressed should, according to Freire, be challenged to see beyond their experiences and especially the situation which they are in. It is with an understanding of this that human beings can enable them to greater “self- and community realization”. (ibid, pp. 17-18) According to Freire, defined by Glass, the oppressed must be able to read to know the world and be critical towards it. It is first thereafter they are able to write their future. (ibid, p. 19)

4.2 Functional literacy and functional illiteracy

Functional literacy is literacy for everyday use, according to Benedicta Egbo (2000, p. 23). She means that the major beneficiary of functional literacy is not the individual but the whole community. Egbo argues that functional literacy draws a relationship between lack of literacy skills and socio-economical underdevelopment. This is why functional literacy is most influential when writing adult education policies in many development countries. (ibid, p. 23) In Literacy for life it is implicated that functional literacy is diverse and affected by many factors, such as cultural and social environments (2005, p. 151). UNESCO is defining a functional literate person as a person who “can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community’s development.” (ibid, p. 30) Functional literacy itself means, according to UNESCO, that “[l]iteracy is a tool for learning, as well as a social practice whose use can increase the voice and participation of communities and individuals in society” (Literacy a UNESCO perspective 2003, p. 2).

Pai Obanya writes in Towards a reading society that functional literacy programmes for adult learners should emphasize literacy for empowerment so that improved quality of life, self-discovery, enhanced income earning potentials, and improved ability to make reasoned choices and decisions on matters affecting the adult learners’ lives follow. (2003, p. 4) The most important thing to focus on in a functional literacy programme, according to Obanya, is that the programme “should result in an improved capacity for people to participate in their nation’s democratic process because of increased literacy skills” (ibid, p. 4). For people that are marginalised, like rural and urban poor people, it is extra important that they are “involved fully in developing reading and literacy
programmes that directly touch on their lives” (ibid, p. 5) The reading material must be closely related to the learners’ daily lives and should be able to change their life conditions for the better. Obanya writes that “[t]he programme should go hand-in-hand with improvements in living standards; skill enhancement; and economic, political, and social empowerment activities in other areas”. (ibid, p. 5)

The opposite way of viewing functional literacy is to look at the term functional illiteracy. As it is stated by UNESCO in NFE-MIS Handbook, an illiterate person cannot read or write, a functionally illiterate person can, however, read and possibly write simple sentences with a limited vocabulary. These persons can, however, not deal with reading and writing in what that is required of them in their own society. (NFE-MIS Handbook 2005, p. M 1-8)

4.3 Theoretical framework

The texts above sum up two partly different ways of viewing literacy. These two ways of viewing literacy resemble each other but are complementing each other as well.

Paolo Freire’s theory of ‘conscientization’ has its focus on education and not on literacy itself but it is relevant for the study because of its content and its context. The theory of ‘conscientization’ shows that literacy is important, not only for the knowledge, but for the effects it makes. The skills of reading and writing, and of being numerate, create a personal development for the individuals. Functional literacy is in addition to the theory of ‘conscientization’ focusing on that literacy foremost should be beneficiary for the whole community, and not so much on the development of the individual itself.

This means that Freire’s theory is directed towards the individual, while the concepts of functional literacy and functional illiteracy are directed towards the community. They are here used together since we will argue that social awareness, the individual development as well as the community’s development is important in relation to literacy.

Both Freire’s theory of ‘conscientization’ and the concept functional literacy have specific descriptions on how literacy programmes should be formed to make a difference in the participants’ lives. The theoretical framework is hence built on the belief that literacy can change peoples’ lives, but the participants must be taught in the right way, a way that suits their daily lives.

By using this theoretical framework we are able to analyse how these ways of viewing literacy development stands in relationship with the effects of MULDP. MULDP is about both literacy and development and it is therefore interesting to see if Freire’s theory of ‘conscientization’ and functional literacy/illiteracy can be traced in the results of this study.
5. Method

The method in this study is based on the research questions, described in chapter 1.1, which have a qualitative approach. The method is therefore qualitative. We have chosen a qualitative approach because it, as Widerberg puts it, deals with how people understand phenomenon (2002, p. 17). It is difficult to draw conclusions about what difference literacy makes for the learners, if the learners do not get the opportunity to express it themselves.

This chapter begins with a description of the chosen method; unstructured focus group interviews and an explanation to why this method was found most suitable. The chapter then describes how the method is approached. Thereafter the text describes how the material gathered with unstructured focus groups interviews were transcribed and analysed with help from the theoretical framework. After this the validity and reliability are discussed and finally some ethical considerations are being commented.

5.1 Unstructured focus group interviews

The form of interview that was chosen in this study was unstructured focus group interviews. Interviews are, according to Widerberg, a way of retrieving oral opinions (2002, p. 16) and it was only the learners of the literacy circles that could give their views of how the programme and literacy has effected them. No one else can give their opinions and since this study wanted to gain understanding of the effects MULDP has had in the learners’ lives, this was the best way of retrieving knowledge.

Focus group interviews were chosen because MULDP is using literacy circles as their method and the learners are therefore used of discussing with each other. Focus group discussions are, according to Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, in a relaxed environment, and the participants often enjoy sharing ideas, perceptions and opinions. (2000, p. 5) The group constellation makes the interview more natural since the participants are influencing each other, just as they are in real life. (ibid, p. 11) The constellation is influenced by the group’s homogeneity, since different person has different roles. (ibid, p. 72) The participants can in other words find strength in each other when telling what difference the programme has made.

Another reason to why the method focus group interviews were chosen was language barriers; the learners did not speak English. Because of the language barrier, interpreters were needed to be able to perform the interviews. Mrs. Beatrice Chisiza and Mrs. Betty Chimbe8 were used as interpreters, partly because they where fluent in both English and the local languages, partly because they as Malawians had a good knowledge in the cultural context in the villages.

Semi-structured individual interviews with the learners were considered, but this was impossible for several reasons. First, because of the need of interpreter, the material would have been large and difficult to handle. Second is that it was hard to distinguish just a few learners to interview. Almost all the learners were eager to meet us and were

8 Trainers of MULDP.
proud to say that they had been speaking with us. Third, the group dynamic were an important part of the circles and in our interviews. This had been lost if individual interviews had been performed.

Observations were also considered but were dismissed. Because of the rainy season, the circles were not active and were gathered just to meet us. There was, so to say, nothing to observe. The language barrier had, on the other hand, made it impossible for us to gain any usable information from the observations, even if this had been possible.

5.2 Approach

A total of 24 interviews with all together 271 learners were performed. The interviews varied in length from around half an hour to an hour and a half. This was due to factors like the learners’ individual personality and how long the learners had been active in the circle. Some were eager to give long and deep answers, while others needed very direct and specified questions to answer us at all.

The way of interviewing and moderating the interviews has been unstructured, this to be able to adapt the questions to every occasion. The interview scheme has been centred around themes rather than on questions. The themes made it possible to ask questions in the manner that best could communicate the topics and give rich responses. (Beck & Manuel 2008, p. 74) Noted was that the interviews in the end started to become similar, and that the pre-understanding became problematic for the unstructured scheme.

When the participants were comfortable with each other, the focus group interviews worked very well. Krueger and Casey write that we all are equally influenced by people around us (2000, p. 11). The learners were influenced not only by us as moderators but also by themselves. There was a problem when two was gathered into one focus group. During those interviews the learners were not as eager to talk as in the interview with only one participating literacy circle.

Our wish was to record all interviews to be able to listen carefully to the translation and instead of taking notes, try to find new angles of the information given and ask new follow-up questions. The study ended up with thirteen recorded interviews and eleven non-recorded interview because of conditions we could not influence, most of them related to weather conditions. The interviews were, however, similar to each other no matter if they were recorded or not so all material recorded or not, could be used in the same manner.

5.3 Analyzing method

This study uses an analysis method, that Kvale and Brinkmann calls Meaning condensation. In this method “[l]ong statements are compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense of what is said is rephrased in a few words” (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 205). Meaning condensation, as Kvale and Brinkmann describe it, involves five steps. The first step is to read through the transcribed interview to get a sense of the whole. Next step is to determine the natural meaning units of the text. The
third step is to sort the statements found in the second step into different themes. Fourth step is to relate the meaning units and themes to the aim of the study. Fifth step is to tie together the essential themes of the interviews and write a descriptive statement. (ibid, pp. 205-207)

Kvale and Brinkmann write that this analysis method can help the researcher “to analyse extensive and often complex interview texts by looking for natural meaning units and explicating their main themes” (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 207). After finding the themes, these can be interpreted and analysed with help from a theoretical framework. In this thesis, the content in the themes are analysed with the composed theoretical framework, described in chapter 4. The analysis is done by finding traces of Freire’s theory of conscientization and of functional literacy/illiteracy in the results.

Since most of the non-recorded interviews took place in the end of the study when the themes already was found the answers could be analysed with just help from our notes.

5.4 Reliability, validity and research ethics

The reliability and validity of this thesis are both complex and simple. The results are qualitative with answers that depend on which individuals that participated but also on the situation they were in at this time. Therefore it is difficult to get exactly the same result as this study. As Merriam points out in *Fallstudien som forskningsmetod*⁹, qualitative research is not isolating phenomenon or single human being’s opinions. Instead the research tries to describe and understand other humans’ view of the world and specific phenomenon, since there are many ways of viewing the world and interpret it a qualitative study cannot be repeated. (1994, p. 181) The thesis does, however, include a rather substantial amount of group interviews so the result might therefore have a good reliability.

The validity of this thesis is based on the field study and depends on the informant’s personal knowledge and experience. It is also affected by the translation of the interpreters. Sometimes it felt like the interpreters only said a few words when the informants had said several sentences. They tried to pin down the most important information and the answers are therefore controlled by all that participated in the unstructured focus groups interviews. The pre-understanding and interpretation were affecting the result as well. The transcription and understanding will not be perfect, we can never be certain that we got everything correct because of the translation. The transcription is affecting the reliability, since there are as many transcriptions styles as there are transcribers. Even the exact same written word in a transcription can have different meaning, depending on where the transcribers insert periods and commas. (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 185)

An ethical issue as well as a topic concerning reliability and validity is the language barriers. English is neither our, nor their, birth language, and therefore it has been important for us to express ourselves so that there were no misunderstandings. According to Thomsson, problems concerning language barriers are relatively easy to cope with. (2002, p. 98) We choose to use interpreter so language barriers were not a

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⁹ Case study research in education.
major problem. One thing we knew could be a problem with using interpreters was, however, that we could not be certain that the translation was correct, but we had to trust the answers we were given. According to Kvale, it is important that the interpreter must be culturally accepted and has a great knowledge in both English and the local language. (2009, p. 160) This is why we chose to use Mrs. Chisiza and Mrs. Chimbe as interpreters, since they are well known by the learners. Using them as interpreters can have influenced the answers from the learners. The learners may have been careful not to be critical to the programme when the trainers were there. This is important to have in mind when looking at our findings. The results of this study are, however, benefitting for the interpreters as well so we do not question the trustworthy in their interpretations.

The cultural context which was entered is also an important ethical concern. We came from another country and stood out because of the colour of our skin. This made the learners treat us different, for example, while the learners where sitting on mats or on the ground, we were offered chairs to sit on. We tried our best to fit into their culture; for example it was important how we dressed. In Malawi it was forbidden by law for women to show their knees until 1994 and it is still not common to see women wearing trousers in the villages. We choose to wear the traditional chitenje-fabrics when visiting the villages to pay our respect to the learners and their culture; this made them more comfortable with the interview situation.

The circle that was interviewed was handpicked by Mrs. Chisiza and Mrs. Chimbe. They choose groups with a wide range of diversities, for example from different tribes, areas and which had been active for different length of time. They choose these groups so that we could see the diversity of literacy in the context of Northern Malawi.

Since we have interviewed the learners in groups, we are not hundred percent certain who said what and especially not since it is being translated. We have therefore chosen to see the learners as groups and when citing someone, they are cited as a group and named after their circle, for example a learner in Tiyamike circle says that and that.

Our interpreters introduced us to the learners and explained to them who we were, where we came from and what we were doing. They explained what we would do with the interview materials. The informants thereafter approved to be a part of our study and gladly answered our questions.
6. Result and analysis

This chapter presents the result from the unstructured focus group interviews. It begins with a presentation of the learners and their situation and thereafter describes the learners’ view of literacy and what literacy means for them. After this the effects of literacy are presented, divided into themes found using meaning condensation; changes in the family, health issues, changes in the community and benefits from agriculture and business related issues. The results are analysed with help from the theoretical framework presented in chapter 4. The chapter ends with a conclusion of the result and analysis.

6.1 The learners

We performed 24 interviews with a total of 271 learners. These learners are a part of MULDPs literacy circles. The learners lived in agricultural rural areas and it was mostly through agricultural means that they made their living. There were mostly female participants, something that reflects in how the circles are built up. One reason to why so few men participated in the circle activities is that the men felt embarrassed and did not want to show that they were illiterate.

We did not care to ask about the learners’ ages since many of them are not certain of their age, but it has been an age range from about 16 to perhaps 80. We, however, asked about their relationship status and how many children they have since we found this important to understand the context they are living in. Most of the learners were married, some were divorced, some widows and a few were singles. The number of children varied from none to twelve and the average was 4,5 children per learner.¹⁰

The literacy circles are normally arranged in villages by facilitators. During the period that we were in the country the circles were normally not active, because of the rainy season. We have therefore not met the whole circles but those of the learners who could leave their work for a while. In each interview, it was a participation range between six and 30 participants, including facilitators.

Most of the learners failed to go to school when they were young because of different reasons. Among them are poverty, marriage and sicknesses. Some therefore see these circles as an opportunity to learn things that they never had a chance to learn before. A learner in Kamtambo and Lwazi circles said that “I first went to school when I was young but did not finish. I wanted to remind myself of how to be literate and also be involved in development activities” (19/3 2010). The learner, in other words, saw MULDP as a way to development.

The most common reason to join the circles was the wish to learn how to read and write. With this wish came related wishes, like to learn how to read and write their name, to be able to know the direction of the buses, read and write letters on their own

¹⁰ Important to notice is that these numbers are related to children that were alive, otherwise these numbers would have been higher.
6.2 The views and meaning of literacy

Most basically, the learners view literacy as the knowledge to read and write, but this is only a small part of the picture. Literacy is seen as a way to communicate. Being literate means, for example, that a learner by herself can read letters from her husband, and also that she can write a letter in return. These modern days literacy also means that the learner can operate a cell phone, know who is calling and what the text messages says.

All the learners see literacy as something very important, something that has an impact on both their personal lives and on their contribution to the community’s development. One of the learners expressed it as “it was like we were naked those days [when we were illiterate] but now we have clothes” (Kawiya circle 15/3 2010). Considering the shame it means to be naked, this is a strong metaphor. Literacy is seen as important because it is a way to learn new things, things the learners did not know in the past. This basically means that a literate person, according to the learners, has more knowledge and can do things on his or her own and know many things compared to when he or she were illiterate. To concretise this, one learner said that “literacy helps you to understand more things” (Chimbere circle 17/3 2010). One learner expressed that “we feel we came from the darkness and now we are going to the light” (Mtende circle 7/4 2010) In Katuwatuwa circle they raised the same subject, but in the context that as an illiterate you have no idea of what is going on in the world. Being literate means being in the light and knowing what is going on in life. (8/4 2010) This goes hand-in-hand with Freire’s statement that the oppressed must be able to read to know the world (Glass 2001, p. 19)

Something that is linked together with knowledge is that the learners viewed literacy as a way to develop. When being literate they have the knowledge necessary to develop themselves and therefore contribute to the development of the community. This is matching both Freire’s theory and functional literacy, as shown in the theoretical framework. Freire is pointing towards literacy as an individual developer while the concept of functional literacy is pointing towards the development for the whole community. In Kakoma circle the learners mentioned that a literate person’s behaviour differs from an illiterate person. When you are literate you look smarter and more organised. An illiterate person can be disorganised and can ask questions you should not need to ask. As literate you do not depend on others, but depend on yourself. Literate persons take greater space in the community and are not ashamed for themselves. (9/4
In Takondwa circle one learner said that being literate means to know more things, and that being literate means that they have “moved one step ahead in life” (7/4 2010). In Mtende circle they even said that being literate made them feel like human beings (7/4 2010). This can be found in Freire’s theory where he stated that education makes the learner move from the level of instinct basic needs to the level of existence (Glass, 2001, p. 17).

Another personal development is that when you are literate, it is easier to get employed and to get promotion. As illiterate one learner could get employed and then work for several years without getting any promotion, all while watching the ones with diplomas come, work for some months and then get promotion. According to this learner, being literate means knowing how to do things and because of that get promotion. (Kamtambo & Lwazi circles 19/3 2010) Being literate can also mean that the learners can run their own business, for example did one informant say that “[t]ogether with a friend I have started a small business; we sell vegetables from a garden we have established on our own” (Kamtambo & Lwazi circles 19/3 2010).

For the learners, literacy means the possibility to participate in elections, knowing that they can write the right name on the voting paper. Learners in Fikondane circle expressed that “we didn’t make any mistakes [in the last election] because we know the person and the name of the person and we could read. We were able to read the instructions” (9/3 2010). Pai Obanya writes that functional literacy programmes “should result in an improved capacity for people to participate in their nation’s democratic process because of increased literacy skills”. (2003, p. 4) To be able to read instructions and know which role you and the leaders of the local and national government are making it is important. Literacy is, as Obanya requested, something that is improving the democratic process by making the citizens aware, something the statements by Fikondane circle proves.

In a democratic sense, being literate means that the learners are people to be counted on. When they are literate they can be given roles in the community, like a secretary or a chairman in a committee. This gives the learners a chance to be recognised in the community, something they find very important. Literacy, in other words, means respect. When the learners are given roles to play in the community, people respect them because they are literate and can lead the community. Several of the interviewed learners described that others in the community did not take their contributions or ideas seriously when they were illiterate. Now when they are literate they can make their voices heard and it is easier to make decisions. One of them said the following:

On the village activities it was very hard to understand and agree with other people to do something since I was not literate. Now I am able to understand that these people want us to do something because it is good for us. (Taonga circle 16/3 2010)

This indicates that being literate makes you aware of your own surroundings; something Freire stated is a key factor to social change (Literacy for life 2005, p. 154). Another learner meant that it is easier to get the message quickly when being literate, saying that: “[s]ometimes when you are illiterate, people can come [up] with good ideas or good things but you cannot understand it easily”. (Kamtambo & Lwazi circles 19/3 2010) This goes hand-in-hand with the functional literacy’s role as “a social practice whose use can increase the voice and participation of communities and individuals in society”
(Literacy a UNESCO perspective 2003, p. 2) and that it is, like Egbo argues, foremost the community and not the individual that is the major beneficiary of literacy programmes. (2000, p. 23)

As understood above, being literate means being respected. Besides that, literacy means that you learn to have more respect for each others. One circle even meant that literacy itself does not give respect, only that you learn to respect others. They meant that when you respect others, they respect you in return. (Fikondane circle 9/3 2010) This is a development of what Freire calls critical knowledge, to be able to ask why and how questions, for example, why do we treat people the way we do and how should we treat them? (Freirian Dictionary 2010)

Several different views of literacy have been noticeable among the learners. While some learners are satisfied with learning to read and write their own and perhaps their children’s name, other learners almost expected to get fully educated and get a diploma. This can be compared with the implication that literacy, according to functional literacy, is diverse and affected by many factors, as it is written in Literacy for life (2005, p. 151). It can also be compared with that literacy is two faced; functional literacy and functional illiteracy. Some of the learners only moves from being illiterate to becoming functional illiterate.

6.3 Effects of MULDP

This section presents the effects MULDP has had on the learners’ lives, from their points of view. The differences that MULDP has done in the participants lives are sometimes great and other times smaller. The effects have been differently seen in different areas depending on their previous life situations and depending on where in the learning progress they are. Some groups started as late as 2009, and the impact the programme has had on them are therefore smaller than for those who started earlier. It is noticeable that the effects have been different for various individuals.

6.3.1 Changes in the families

The family is an important issue for most of the learners, and many of the changes in the learners’ lives have been beneficial for their families as well. Many learners said that when they were illiterate, it was very common that they had big fights in their families, something that has changed since they became literate. They are now living more peacefully with each other. The major difference is that both husbands and wives are contributing to the families’ livelihood. They have learnt to discuss things with each other; instead of fighting they are, for example, discussing what to seed and how to raise their children. They are therefore making the family more successful. The most noticeable improvement in the families is, without doubt, that they now cooperate. In the interview with Kamtambo and Lwazi circles a women said that she and her husband are now a good example in the community since they are communicating with each other. In the families they are helping each other and are doing things in the household together, like taking care of the children. (Kamtambo & Lwazi circles 19/3 2010) Literacy makes the families stay together in the long run. In Vumani circle it was
expressed that they were “building strong families. Before some men could say ‘My wife is illiterate, she don’t know things, I don’t want her’. Now the men like that the women have knowledge and there are less divorces.” (Vumani circle 30/3 2010)

The children are another important issue. Almost all learners had children and the children have also benefited from that their parents have become literate and numerate. The older children are for example now encouraged to go to school. Their parents have realized that without education and knowing at least basic literacy skills, their children will not have a bright future. The parents can now follow their children’s development in school, and help them when it is possible.

We understand to feed our children before they go to school, [we] wake up in the morning, prepare breakfast for them, wash them and of they go. We understand that if the child is well fed he or she will be able to understand in class, otherwise, if he or she is hungry they will just sleep in class and getting nothing. When he or she comes back we again prepare something for them to eat so that they keep healthy. (Chimbere circle 17/3 2010)

The quote above shows clear influences of functional literacy in how literacy benefits more than just the one becoming literate, when the literate person can engage in activities where literacy is necessary (Literacy for life 2005, p. 30). In one group it was mentioned that nowadays the children respected their mother. Earlier the children could question the importance of going to school, saying “you are also illiterate so why should I bother to go to school?” (Kamtambo & Lwazi 19/3 2010) but now mother and children work together with their homework.

The unborn children are also affected, since family planning is a major subject in development countries and therefore in the circles. Family planning methods is about planning if and when you should give birth and how you should keep your children alive. The new knowledge has taught the women not to give birth to too many children. In Taonga circle one learner expressed it as “at first we could give birth anyhow, this year, next year, but now we are able to plan when to give birth” (Taonga circle 16/3 2010).

While becoming literate, the learners have been taught about how to take care of children. They have learnt that you cannot just deliver children to the world; you should be able to take care of them as well. The learners expressed that “[w]e know how many children we can manage, since we have to feed them, cloth them and take care of them”. (Kamtambo & Lwazi circles 19/3 2010). In Kawiya circle they expressed that:

this time we also have enough to eat just because when you have too many little children it is difficult for you to carry them to the garden and then do farming. So because of family planning and the knowledge we have had we are able to go freely to the garden and leave the children at home. (15/3 2010)

Effects considering the children are clearly visible. This can be connected to Silawal-Giri’s claim that motivation to change must be awakened by the learners themselves (2003, p. 172). Obanya has pointed towards the importance of focusing on subjects closely connected to the learners’ daily lives (2003, p. 5). Children are important for the women and considered that the average woman in Malawi give birth to 5,6 children in her life, their health is a constant subject of worries.
In some of the interviews the children’s birthdays have been mentioned. Now when the learners are literate they are able to know when their children are born, and cannot as before only tell that their “baby was born when it was time to grow maize” (Taonga circle 16/3 2010).

6.3.2 Health issues

Health and hygiene are subjects that are of outermost concern for the learners. Hygienic issues like different diseases and knowledge of how to wash yourself and your clothes and clean your surroundings are important knowledge but it is knowledge that not everyone has. When you know about the diseases, you know how to protect yourself and your family from them. This is an important lesson learnt that shows that the programme aims to create functional literate people, because Obanya point out that a significant part of functional literacy is about changing your life conditions for the better (2003, p. 5), which the programme has succeeded with.

“We acquire skills in sanitation and hygiene [and even] though some of us are women we are able to dig a pit at home, the rubbish pit, pit latrines, […] we have acquired knowledge on how we can keep our bodies clean.” (Chimbere circle 17/3 2010) Some learners said that when you keep yourself clean, more will come and buy from you at the market. (Tiyamike circle 11/3 2010) You will no longer be rejected because of your smell, a factor they previously did not understand.

Something that the learners previously did not understand was their children’s under-five-clinic-card. The cards show the child’s health on a several years basis. The learners can now understand these cards and know if their children have dropped or gained weight. They can also understand why the children’s weight is important to keep an eye on and they know how to adjust the children’s food intake if it is necessary.

HIV/AIDS is an issue that is rather important in a country where around twelve percent of the population is infected by the virus. Knowing what the disease means and how it is spread, make the learners able to prevent the disease from further spreading. Knowledge about HIV/AIDS also prevents discrimination of HIV positive in the communities. During one of the interviews a participant who was HIV positive said that she was afraid to join the circle. “I thought that maybe people [would] chase me away” (Fikondane circle 9/3 2010). What she found out was that the others in the circle were very friendly and that when she and the rest of the learners where told about the disease, there was no discrimination. She expressed it as through literacy they have learnt not to discriminate and to respect other persons.

Since they became literate, learners have started to appreciate hospital care. In Fikondane circle, one of the learners said that she believed that you only were taken to the hospital when it was time to die. (Fikondane circle 9/3 2010) When they now have learnt that a hospital visit is not the end of the life, they encourage each other to go there for treatment. Being literate also helps learners to identify what type of drugs they are given and to remember the amount they should take. Hospital care is, nevertheless, expensive and even though the learners know that they should take the children to the hospital, they cannot afford the necessary treatments.
Keeping healthy is to be social aware and, as Freire’s theory shows it, social awareness is a key to social changes. Through the ability to read and write the learners can contribute to their own health and their own life changes.

### 6.3.3 Changes in the community

There have been many and diverse changes in the communities where the circles have been active. The learners of Chimbere circle have created a Mothers group. The Mothers group is a group in the community in which mothers of all age get together with the aim to encourage girls to go to school, encourage younger women to take up school, to prevent girls to marry early and to encourage the others in the community to dress properly and that they are behaving good, this by helping the girls to discipline themselves. (Chimbere circle 17/3 2010) Freire believed that literacy makes the oppressed to understand the situation they are in and that this knowledge enables them to greater “self- and community realization” (Glass 2001, pp. 17-18). This is something that has become a reality in Chimbere circle.

An example from Taonga circle is that the greatest impact on the community has been that the circle members have started several activities together. Among those activities are that they are feeding the orphans three times a week and that they have started a nursery school. Other circles mentioned that they wanted nursery schools for their children, but in Taonga circle they had taken the initiative and actually started on their own. (Taonga circle 16/3 2010) Also in Chimbere circle the learners had started a nursery school, this to enable younger parents to go back to school. (17/3 2010)

In Taonga circle as in some other circles the members have started to help the elderly and the sick, by fetching water, fetching fire wood, clean their houses and help them with their food. In the villages surrounding Titukule circle the inhabitants had earlier major problem with hunger. Several village chiefs therefore got together and bought some goats which they leave in one village at the time. When the goats have had kids, the older goats are given to next village. The whole community is therefore making profits from those first goats. (Titukule circle 29/3 2010)

Functional literacy should, according to *Literacy a UNESCO perspective*, not just be a tool for learning but also a social practice. One learner said that “just getting together, being a group, gives something” (Chilungamo circle 10/3 2010). The learner meant that when they met, they discuss things and discussions leads to development. This social practice increases the participation in the society. It can be enlightened with that all members should have an increased participation in the community, no matter if they have become literate or someone else has. Functional literacy is by that beneficiary not just for the participants but for the whole community.

The learners in Chilungamo circle have gathered to start and evolve a pottery. They are, for example, making a devise which enables them to use lesser fire wood, it is almost like a stove in clay. This enables them to save money and work time concerning fire wood. They can also sell the devises and make profits.
Many learners have proudly said that they now have the possibility to have a role in the community. Since they are literate they can join committees and be given roles as chairmen, secretaries or something else. What they have acknowledged is that they now have a role in the community, they have something to say and their opinions are counted as important. MULDP has a strong role in many communities. The learners are respected and appreciated, something that has increased during time. In early phases of the circles’ existence, the learners could get laughed at and community members called them names. The learners, especially the men, were questioned for their participation and the community members asked them “Where were you when you were young?” In Takondwa circle (9/4 2010) learners said that those who laugh are the ones who are still dull while they as members of the literacy circles are able to change and go ahead. Some members of the community told the learners of the circles that they were wasting their time and that they could do more important thing with their time. Now, however, community members are jealous of the learners and regret that they did not join the circle themselves. The learners of MULDP inspire their neighbour with their knowledge and the knowledge is also spread among the members of the community.

In Titukule circle the facilitator had introduced a problem solving tree. This tree means that they together try to pin down the origin of the problem by following the issue from the rot to the top. Through the tree they have been able to, for example, learn consequences of different things. One of the problems that had been solved by this method was that the learners had learnt to cook the right amount of food to the whole family so that all the members got full and no food was wasted. (29/3 2010) The problem solving trees have taught the learners something that can be compared with what Freire called critical knowledge. It is, as viewed with the pedagogy of the oppressed, important for the learners to understand their situation. (Glass 2001, p. 17) It is by questioning the things that are wrong, and by trying to solve different parts of the problem that enables the learners to, through critical consciousness, develop and create better lives for themselves. They get the chance to see beyond their most present situation and find solutions. Other examples mentioned in this chapter might not show how critically the learners have thought about their problem, but it have shown example of the learners willingness to change. It has enabled the learners to develop not just themselves but their community to something better. Through several dialogues they have identified their problems and found the solutions, something that goes hand in hand with a central part of Freire’s theory.

### 6.3.4 Benefits from agriculture and business related issues

Agriculture is an important subject that MULDP teach the learners, who all live on the countryside where farming is the way to make a living. The skills in agriculture were something that was mentioned in all of the circles. To be able to grow a variety of crops enables the learners to eat food that is of good nutrition. The six food groups can all be found in the garden, if you know how to grow them and that is something that many have learnt. This means that they have not just learnt to grow; they have learnt to grow the right thing which they can live on. When connected to Freire, it is possible to see the connections between agricultural development, and food security with what Freire called “the common sense of the masses” indicating that it is knowledge that everyone needs to have but not all have. (Glass 2001, p. 19)
Food is, over all, seen as an important issue. In one group, hunger was expressed as a major problem that they had before. They could steel just not to starve to death, but now they have learnt how to grow their own food and are not starving in the same way (Titukule circle 29/3 2010). The lesson learnt is that if you can grow enough food, or can afford to buy it, you can live a better life. Through literacy the learners have not just acquired knowledge about the six food groups, they have also learnt about the necessity of diversified and balanced food and how they best can grow food. Many have learnt how to bake and how to measure their food, so that they are not wasting anything. (Chilungamo circle 10/3 2010) This can be compared with Freire’s statement that “the good life” must be shaped and nurtured in a way that is most successful for the community. (Glass 2001, p. 17) For the people in the villages, the knowledge about food is something that changes their lives for the better.

The learners were glad that they had been taught about how to grow the crops correctly. They felt, however, that they could not use all their new knowledge because they did not have the money to buy fertilizers which made their harvest smaller. The size of this year’s maize was, for example, mentioned as a big problem in one of the circles. In some of the circles the learners had been taught that compost manure can work as fertilizer. This enables them not to buy fertilizer but do it themselves. Fertilizers are many times seen as what makes the plant grow tall, and that it has to be bought. When they now have learnt that they can make their own fertilizer, they know that they can get a good harvest without spending a lot of money on fertilizers. Obanya writes that a functional literacy programme should lead to “enhanced income earning potentials” (2003, p. 4) and when the learners do not have to spend a lot of money on fertilizers, and still get good harvests, their profits get bigger.

Some of the circles had started businesses with their new knowledge within the agriculture area. One circle planted trees and sold the seedlings as a way to make a living. This had even made them able to open a bank account together. (Temwanani circle 8/4 2010) Other circles had gardens together and grow and sold vegetables from them. Common for all circles was a wish to start something big, a business they could live on. Several learners mentioned that they joined the programme in hope of gaining knowledge about how to run a business and with the hope to get money to start the business. They now found themselves stuck in the middle of the process since they had gained the knowledge needed but did not get any money so that they could get started with their businesses. MULDP is not providing money, only knowledge; they are, however, running a project besides the literacy programme. The project called “Saving and credit” is encouraging the learners to save money so that they eventually can fulfil their dreams. The dream of starting a business most often contained a wish to be able to pay school fees and schoolbooks and to send their children to school. Another wish was to have money to plant some trees and crops in the garden, which they could harvest and both live on and sell and make profits.

One woman saw her new knowledge concerning businesses as empowering. She said that: “I have […] learnt that business is not only for the men, it is also for the ladies; I can do my own business without going to the men” (Tiyamike circle 11/3 2010). The new knowledge about business has in other words worked as a way to make the community more equal. This can be compared to Freire’s argue that humans create their own present and future in the context of the past (Glass 2001, p. 18).When women never have run a business before, it is not obvious for them to break old traditions and
change the coming future. It is each individual that is creating their knowledge and future through participation and own choices.

The lack of literacy skills is, like Egbo writes, possible to connect to socio-economical underdevelopment. There have been major changes in the learners’ lives when they have become literate, changes that are helping them to get further out of socio-economical underdevelopment. They are not getting all the way out of it, but they have taken a little but important step on their way through their newfound knowledge and skills in agricultural issues as well as in issues concerning businesses.

### 6.4 Summary of result and analysis

The learners view literacy as a synonym to knowledge, it is a way to learn new things, things they could not learn when being illiterate. Literacy is also a way to communicate. The skills of literacy have not only made the learners able to read letters and write a reply, they can also operate their cell phones. The learners joined the circle with the wish to learn how to read and write but also with a wish for individual and societal change. The actual changes have been both big and smaller. The families are stronger and it is peace within the families. The genders have become more equal and the husbands are helping their wife’s with the household and the children. The families are also stronger since the grownups have learnt family planning methods. Fewer children are born which makes it easier to stay healthy. The children benefit from their parents literacy skills since they are encouraged to go to school and get help with their homework.

The learners have learnt a lot about health issues, which they have spread to their neighbours. The knowledge about hygiene and about different diseases have changed the learners life conditions for the better, something that enlighten the fact that MULDP is a programme with influences from functional literacy. The communities have also benefited from the literacy circles. The community members have got together as a group and have started activities together, for example potteries and nursery schools. When the learners have become literate, they are respected in the community and can contribute to the development of the community by taking different roles in committees and making their voices heard.

Another effect of MULDP is that the learners have become better farmers, since they now have learned modern and proper farming skills. When they, for example, are able to produce their own compost manure, the harvest gets good without wasting a lot of money on fertilizers. Learners have also become better businessmen, knowing how to count and to give and get the right change. They also know that being clean makes it easier to get your products sold at the market.

It is easy to find traces of both the theory of ‘conscientization’ and of functional literacy/illiteracy in the results. Literacy as seen from the theoretical framework is affecting both the individual and the whole community. The connection between the two parts of the framework, we argue, is that the individual development is necessary to change the community. The community can, however, also influence the individuals, by bulling or encourage the learner in their process to become literate.
7. Discussion

This chapter compares the material analysed in chapter 6 with the literature presented in chapter 3; previous research.

The diversity of literacy is shown in the learners’ view of literacy. For them, literacy is something that is important for development. The learners are not saying what literacy is with one single explanation, for them it is many things. They are, for example, implying that literacy is the way to gain knowledge. With the skills that come with literacy, the learner can grasp opportunities and develop. Like Egbo writes, this can be connected to that a literate person has the knowledge to see alternatives when making choices for the future. (2000, p. 26). A literate person can communicate with others in a wholly different way and is seen as smart, according to the learners of MULDP. Literacy skills are, for example, helping persons to deal with the modern technology, such as cell phones. The results of this study shows, just like the master thesis of Jönsson and Olsson, that literacy for the informants is seen as something that is a part of everyone’s daily lives and of their way to communicate. (2008, p. 80). The learners’ view of literacy is another proof that it is difficult to define what literacy is, since the nature of literacy is extremely individual.

The results of this study demonstrate that the learners are able to see the connection between literacy and development the same way it, according to Kachala, is expressed in many organisations’ manifests. (Kachala 2007, p. 5) This became extra visible when the learners spoke about elections. When illiterate, the learners could not participate in national elections, because they lacked knowledge not only in reading and writing but about the society as well. What can be seen in the results is that even if the learners not fully are a part of the nation’s democracy, they can vote and they do understand what they are voting for and know who they think should win the election. This proves that literate persons have more influence and can, in a greater range, participate in the national development.

The results goes therefore hand-in-hand with, as Kachala writes, that many organisations believe that it is only when you are literate that you can fully cooperate and be a part of the society (Kachala 2007, p. 5). First when the learners have become literate, they are fully and gladly members of the community. Today several learners are willingly taking the role as secretaries or chairmen, proud of being literate and therefore contributing to their society’s development. When being illiterate, many learners were ashamed because of their lack of knowledge, and still many men did not dare to join the circles because they were embarrassed, something that resembles with the statement in Roman’s paper (2004, p. 85).

When the learners have become literate, they make sure that they are not the only ones that benefit from their new knowledge. Members of their family, their relatives and their neighbours, can all gain new knowledge. Sharing is a part of gaining knowledge, just like in the Bengali saying: “the more you give away, the more you have left” (Sen 2003, p. 21). The literacy circles are becoming important meeting places, where the learners can exchange opinions and experiences, just like Ronnäs concluded in her thesis (2009, p. 62). The literacy circles, and the meeting places that these creates, tie people together, the circles creates bonds between the learners and train them to work together for the
greater good, just as Egbo describes it (2000, p. 26). Among our informants this is visible both in the family sphere and in the public sphere. When it comes to the family there were fewer fights between husband and wife and between parents and their children. The members of the family have learnt to work together and share the chores in the home. In the society the learners of a circle have been united and are helping each other with problems they have. Through the knowledge they acquire from MULDP they work together as a unit. The learners are so to say no longer handicapped; they have no longer the disadvantage of being illiterate. They can for themselves express their needs, they know what they need and they are able to stand up for oneself and be proud. As Sen has written the ability to affect one’s own life is a key factor to development. (2003, p. 24) The results are clearly showing evidence of female empowerment, since MULDP are helping women to raise their voices and reflect about their place in the society. One of the learner in Tiyamike circle said that she had learnt that she could do business on her own, without going to the men. The new knowledge has given the female learners confidence in that they can do things on their own, and therefore by themselves do something about the situation they are in. Like Sen writes, this creates a greater independence and, because of this, empowerment. (2003, p. 27)

As mentioned in the section on previous research, Egbo thinks that one problem with literacy projects is that most agencies and governments assume that increased literacy levels will reduce the problem of poverty (2000, pp. 35-36). We agree with Egbo that this is a problem. In our interviews we have seen that literacy is one step in the development towards poverty reduction, but literacy is, like Lind writes, not magic (2008:2, p. 759). If the learners do not get economic help, literacy will not solve their poverty; it will only develop them as human beings. MULDP has developed them as human beings and has affected them in every way of life, both mentally and physically, something that also Roman has expressed. (2004, p. 86) As literate they can find knowledge on how to eat right, take their medicine, keep healthy and, hopefully, stay out of the most severe poverty. Looking back to when they were illiterate, the learners could tell that they had made a great difference in their lives and they realised how disadvantaged they were before. It is just like Sen describes it, with a little knowledge and education a really poor family can change a lot. (2003, p. 22)

In a country were malaria and HIV/AIDS are common diseases knowledge about health is important. The struggle with diseases is something that is affecting not just the individuals but the whole family and in a long run the whole society. The learners have learnt about different diseases and how to prevent them, and have therefore become healthier. We can here make a connection to El Bindari-Hammad’s and Mulholland’s conclusion that knowledge and therefore education is the most important way to fight diseases (1991, p. 105). Like Eisemon, Ratzlaff and Patel write healthy living is connected to medicine and the right use of it (1991, p. 80). Medical instructions are important to acknowledge and learners will not, when they are aware of the use of the medicine, share, it anyhow. Health is therefore connected to social awareness and caring of others, an important part of the development.

Sen writes that knowledge is important and it is with knowledge development occurs. The results show that when the learners can read, they gain more knowledge than when they were illiterate. It is mentioned earlier in this thesis that using interpreters that normally works with MULDP may have influenced the results and may also have made the learners careful not to criticise the programme. We do not believe that this has been
a major problem because one of our questions was about what challenges the learners had met with their new knowledge, and this was a question that gave a lot of responses. If they have knowledge they can develop, but knowledge is not everything, something that is very noticeable in this study. Other resources like money, owning land and farming skills are just as important as the literacy skills when it comes to development. Even if literacy is a way to develop the lives of the learners, new problems arise when they learn new things. The learners want to act on their new abilities, but since they do not have the financial means, they are stuck in the middle. Not able to go back and neither able to go further. We found that there was a frustration in many of the circles because they were so eager to change and develop but could not find a way round the money issues. At the same time, when answering our questions, they realised that they had changed quite a lot. They also realised that the changes they have gone through can help to create a new future for their children. The adults are now encouraging their children to go to school and get education, hoping that their children will have a better future.

The results of this thesis show that MULDP is not like many of those failing literacy projects that Street is writing about (2001, p. 293). According to us, this is because the learners in MULDPs circles are taught to become critical and to question subjects that are relevant in their own lives. A good example is the problem solving tree, where the learners by themselves need to identify their problems. This empowers them. Street has come to the same conclusion, writing that it is the social activity is that is empowering and not the skills of literacy (2001, p. 296). We would like to argue, in addition to Freire and functional literacy, that it is the learners own critical thinking, and their social activity, that is empowering them, not only the technical skills of literacy. We support this argument by referring to the learner who said that getting together as a group give something, because they then discuss their problems together, and therefore develop.

MULDP is, as mentioned in chapter 2, using REFLECT as their teaching method, teaching learners about subjects close to their everyday lives. MULDP uses materials that are written in the learners own mother tongue, something recommended both by Obanya and in Reader Development and Reading Promotion: Recent Experiences from Seven Countries in Africa. Lind is, however, critical to the REFLECT method; claiming that everyone wants to use books when learning and that the learners abandon REFLECT programmes when they have the possibility to attend other classes (Lind 2008:2, p. 760). We can not agree with Lind on this. None of the 24 circles we visited requested more books; they were satisfied with the few ones they already used. We could neither see that learners left MULDP because of the programme’s teaching methods. We were told that some learners had dropped out to join other circles, but not because of the way they were taught, but because other literacy programme offered the learners financial means when joining their circles. Some learners were, however, eager to learn more when they had become literate and had passed their exams. More textbooks, like Lind claims, might therefore be needed for further development in the post-literate circle meetings.

The results show that literacy is important in it self, because it helps the learners to, for example, board the right bus, write their own letters and sign official papers on their own. Literacy is also a key factor to approach subjects learnt in the circles. It is so to say the knowledge that comes through literacy, and not the literacy itself, that is changing the participants’ lives. No matter if you see literacy as the key, as Kachala (2007, p. 8),
or a part of the key, as Street (2001, p. 291) and Sen (2003, p. 27), literacy is important and equal with possibilities to develop. Lind concluded that literacy and development is affecting each other and is dependent on each other (2008:1, p. 66). Something that is noticeable in our findings and analysis.

Some learners of MULDP have experienced that they have been disadvantaged when it comes to work. They expressed that people who are literate can both get employed, and then promoted, while the ones illiterate mostly stays unemployed and never promoted. The learners’ experiences correspond with Roman’s statement that illiterate persons are disadvantaged at workplaces and seldom employed. (2004, p. 85) Increasing chances to get employed means increased opportunities to get a salary and increased opportunities in the future. Literacy can in other words, just like it is stated in Literacy for Life, be a way to reduce poverty (2005, p. 31).

The changes have affected the learners to become either functional literate or functional illiterate. Functional literate are those who have started contributing to the society, those who not just understand the literacy skills but are using them. Many of the learners are using their skills gladly and are signing up for different roles in the community. The functional literate have not just become literate by going to the circles, they have fought their way and have learnt the tools and the social practice that comes with it. (Literacy a UNESCO perspective 2003, p. 2) Others, who can be seen as functional illiterate, know how to read the signs on the buses and can do simple mathematics but not much more than that. Many have been very proud to be able to write their own name and to be able to do simple calculations and not be fooled by others and have been satisfied with this knowledge.
8. Conclusion

This chapter will summaries and conclude the findings of this study. The aim with this thesis was to find out the views and meanings of literacy, in the context of MULDP. It also wanted to find out what effects literacy has had on the learners and how literacy is related to poverty reduction and development.

The effects of literacy are sometimes big and sometimes smaller as seen in the result. The changes exist in both the personal and public sphere; it is, however, the knowledge that comes with literacy that changes the lives of the learners rather than the technical skills of literacy. The changes on a personal level are affecting the public sphere and family relationships. The effects are always going much further than just to the technical skills and it is those butterfly-effects that are developing the learners of MULDP, implying that a little change can lead to something big.

The results show evidence for that the skills of literacy are creating a personal, individual development, something that goes hand-in-hand with the content of the theory of ‘conscientization’. The results are also showing evidence for a great impact of functional literacy since the skills of literacy is not just changing the individual but the whole community. The learners are, so to say, in addition to developing themselves developing those around them. For example their children are benefiting by getting a push forward in their education and they are given good food which is helping them to better lives.

The findings illustrate that literacy is wished for, it is dreamed of and it gives the learners an opportunity to develop. The results are, in other words, showing that literacy is something very important for the learners. It is the learners’ way to gain knowledge and it is a way to be respected in the community. Literacy is, however, not a magic spell. It is not only to wave with the magic wand and all problems with poverty are gone. We can therefore not tell if it is Kachala or Street and Sen that have the most correct opinion, concerning the importance of literacy. It is, as mentioned above, dependent on how you view literacy and what is included in the concept. The learners, as the result show, are often viewing literacy as a tool to develop, something that is showing impact in every way of life.

It is a must to be literate if you want to get the knowledge needed to start an individual development as well as a social development. Developing is one way of trying to reach the new modern world and adjust to global changes. If the illiterates do not become literate they will never have a chance in the fast technological development. If they do not become literate they will never have the possibility to adjust to changes, big as small. Becoming literate therefore means that one can adjust to changes one cannot control, for example the introduction of cell phones and computers.

Becoming literate may be a tool to develop, but it is not the ultimate tool for poverty reduction. If the learners do not get economic help, literacy will not solve their poverty; but it will develop them as human beings and help them to get one step ahead in life.
Bibliography

Unpublished sources

13 recorded interviews with learners of MULDP conducted during March and April 2010. The recordings and the transcriptions are in hold of the authors.

Chilungamo circle – in Kanduli village, interviewed 10th of March 2010
Chimbere circle – in Kamangachulu village, interviewed 17th of March 2010
Fikondane circle – in Chijere village, interviewed 9th of March 2010
Kamtambo & Lwazi circles – in Lwazi village, interviewed 19th of March 2010
Kawiya circle – in Chittheche village, interviewed 15th of March 2010
Mtende circle – in Kabira village, interviewed 7th of April 2010
Takondwa circle – in Kabira village, interviewed 7th of April 2010
Taonga circle – in Malaza village, interviewed 16th of March 2010
Titukule circle – in Mhuju village, interviewed 29th of March 2010
Tiyamike circle – in Mpamba village, interviewed 11th of March 2010
Tiyanjane circle – in Kawaiazi village, interviewed 31st of March 2010
Towwirane circle – in Kajiwunde village, interviewed 7th of April 2010
Vumani circle – in Kabwafu village, interviewed 30th of March 2010

11 non-recorded interviews with learners of MULDP conducted during March and April 2010. Notes are in hold of the authors.

Chiwuwerme & Tiyamike circles – in Kawalzi village, interviewed 30th of March 2010
Dudu circle – in Gowoyani village, interviewed village, interviewed 8th of April 2010
Kakoma circle – in Muwekwa & Yeremia villages, interviewed 9th of April 2010
Katuvatuwa circle – in Yesaya Tembo village, interviewed 8th of April 2010
Mutivwire circle – in Kapatamvula village, interviewed 8th of April 2010
Mwayi circle – in Kaphika Njóka village, interviewed 9th of April 2010
Takondwa circle – in Chiwandauka village, interviewed 9th of April 2010
Temwanani circle – in Zosala village, interviewed 8th of April 2010
Temwanani & Kamwankhuku circles – in Sinda village, interviewed 7th of April 2010
Tunda circle – in Kabwafu village, interviewed 30th of March 2010
Vitambiko circle – in Joseph Mumba village, interviewed 9th of April 2010

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Chipalasa, Mike (2010). Govt for only three children per woman. The daily times, 2010-03-01, p. 3 (Malawian newspaper, in hold of the authors)


Appendix 1

Questions to the learners in the literacy circles

Introduction
Name
Married/widowed/single/divorced
Children

MULDP
Why did you choose to be a part of this programme?

Effects
What changes have there been in your life, since you started participated.
How has this project changed your lives?
Family
Children
Community

Literacy
What is?
Meaning
Importance
(Respect?)

Challenges
What challenges have they met since they become literate?
This study took place in the northern province of Malawi, where Mzuzu is the province capital. If studying the map, the villages where the literacy circles were active are located by the road from Mzuzu down to Nkhata Bay and further down to Chintheche, from Mzuzu up to Rumphi and south of Mzimba.

\[\text{This map is published with permission from the United Nations Publications Board.}\]