

Decentralization and Child Welfare in Malawi: Conceptual Issues and Benefits

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ABSTRACT The concept of decentralization is explored alongside the changes and benefits brought by decentralization to child welfare in Ntchisi and Lilongwe districts, Malawi. Noting that most programs under the current decentralized system have placed more emphasis on community based approach to child welfare, it is only safe to conclude that social development shapes the understanding of district officers in the two districts under study. It became apparent that the district officers' understanding is more related to the concept of devolution, which entails divesting the decision-making power to grassroots level. The practice on the ground, however, suggests that devolution in the two districts is achieved albeit to a limited extent. The changes are consistent with the functionalist thinking of change and progress.