The Influence of School-Culture on Students' Learning in High and Low Performing Schools in Malawi: A Case Study of School Managers' Perspectives in Central West Education Division

By

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DECLARATION

I, Bambiro Hadley H.M. Kumwenda, hereby declare that this study has its originality in me and has never been used for any academic purpose by any student at any university. Besides all this, the sources that I have used or quoted have been duly acknowledged through complete references.

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It was really a daunting task to come up with this write up.

DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on investigating the influence of school-culture on students' learning in high and low performing schools in Central West Education Division (CWED). To this end, a qualitative research case study was used. Eight (8) Head-teachers, sixteen (16) Heads of departments, forty (40) prefects, and eight (8) PTA Executive members were sources of data of this study. To check influence of school-culture on students' learning, semi-structured interviews were done with the Head-teachers, Heads of departments, PTA Executives and Focus group discussions were done with the prefects. The Neo-classical theory guided the study. The theory advocates consideration of welfare of the workers to achieve maximum productivity. There was thematic data analysis according to the research questions and it was established that schools do not operate in the same environments, high performing schools have effective teachers and learners hence success in the school unlike low performing schools, there are adequate teaching and learning materials in high performing schools unlike low performing schools and also the learners in high performing schools are autonomous whereas in low performing schools they rely on spoon feeding. The low performing schools can borrow a leaf from the high performing schools in order to boost performance.

Key words: School-culture, students' performance, high and low performing schools, Central West Education Division, academic achievement, secondary school.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

In the study, the following abbreviations and acronyms have been used:

CWED: Central West Education Division

MoEST: Ministry of Education Science and Technology

CDSS: Community Day Secondary School

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

FIMS: First International Mathematics Study

SIMS: Second International Mathematics Study

FISS: First International Science Study

SISS: Second International Science Study

TIMSS: Trend in Mathematics and Science Study

PISA: Programme for International Students Assessment

PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

NCE: National Centre for Education

IEA: International Education Achievement

EER: Educational Effectiveness Research

SER: School Effectiveness Research

NSCC: National School Climate Council

MSCE: Malawi School Certificate of Education

PTA: Parents and Teacher Association

PSLCE: Primary School Leaving Certification of Education

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

HRTM: Human Relations Theory of Management

SHN: School Health and Nutrition

HT: Head-teacher

HOD: Head of Department

FPE: Free Primary Education

MIITEP: Malawi Integrated In-service Teaching Programme

MASTEP: Malawi Special Distance Teacher Education Programme

IMF: International Monetary Fund

GDP: Growth Domestic Product

HIPIC: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries

EFA: Education For All

ISEM: Improving Secondary Education in Malawi

IPC: Internal Procurement Committee

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Overview

This chapter presents the background against which the study on influence of school-culture on students' learning in high or low performing schools in Malawi was conducted. It also highlights the purpose of the study. Additionally, it discusses the problem statement, presents main research question and sub-research questions that set parameters for this investigation. It also spells out the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. It also provides the significance of the study, assumption of the study, operational definition of terms and structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background to the Study

Education is known to be a means of acquiring knowledge, values, and skills that provide people opportunities to adjust to the social and cultural changes. This capacity in turn helps people to participate in political, cultural, and social activities (Anbesu, 1996). This concurs with Amsalu (2002) who indicates that the performance of educational institutions could be determined by the nature of school-culture including quality of administration, commitment of teachers and students' motivation for their learning. Specifically, Maslowski (2001) indicates that the effect of educational variables like teacher and student behaviour including school-culture, in general, have due value to students' academic achievement.

Consequently, Hoy and Miskel (1987) noted that teacher qualification without commitment, school without healthy school-culture, students' existence at school without motivation for learning is artificial. Any society infuses a specific culture to schools, as schools are miniature societies (Lawton, 1987) the respective communities come up with their own school-culture. School-culture can therefore be defined as a term generally referring to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of

how a school functions. According to Glossary of Education (2013) the concept culture embraces more concrete issues like physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which schools embrace and celebrate racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity. Culture could be developed and transmitted consciously and this is practical in schools.

Culture is defined by scholars in various ways with minor differences. According to Miskel (2017) culture is a system of shared orientations that hold the unit together. Hopkins (2001) defines culture as being a composition of a group of ideas, customs, beliefs, objects, attitudes, language, art, technology, and traditions. The definitions imply that all cultural practices that exist around the school have a strong linkage with school day today practices and means that school-culture is born from the general societal culture (Lawton, 1987). This might be possible because the elements of school-culture like vision, mission and values do not stand apart from societal cultures.

The implication remains that the outcomes of schools have a strong relationship with the nature of school culture. For example, the schools' visions, missions, mottos and values emanate from the existing societies like ideas, policies, and rules and regulations of the governing body. School-culture has different contextual influence as such is not static. This concurs with Hoy and Miskel (1987) who postulate that situations in today's work organisations, like schools, are dynamic and uncertain. The situations are changing from time to time, place to place, and the nature of schools depend on the situation. This implies that if the situation is favourable, schools become successful and otherwise, schools become a failure. This must always be noted that situations are under control of people.

Different scholars indicate that school-culture has a great influence on students' classroom academic achievement. This is in support of Hoy and Miskel (1987) who note that each culture describes the shared beliefs of teachers in the school. School with strong cultures of efficacy, trust and academic optimism provide higher levels of students' academic achievement or else it will intimidate the socio-emotional developments of students. Additionally, an effective and a healthy school-culture supports teacher-student, teacher-teacher and student-student relationship. The effective and healthy school-culture gives opportunity and venues for togetherness, discussing fundamental values, taking responsibility, coming together as a community and celebrating individual and group success (Brown, 2004).

In the event where a school has an effective and healthy school-culture, teachers look responsible. They tend to observe what students are doing, where they are doing, how they do it and why they do it and who they are in a classroom context. This is manifested by effective teachers as they are always committed to tasks related to teaching and learning. The effective teachers ably understand individual differences among learners. This concurs with Reid, Hopkins and Holly (1987) who indicates that creative people tend to be divergent thinkers. This entails that teachers must understand that creative students go beyond ordinary limitations of classrooms and schools, think and act in unconventional and even imaginary ways.

In a school, where the teachers are committed and have strong participation in school related activities, students' performance improve unlike where the teachers are not committed and lazy as poor results among the learners are registered. The teachers' practices have a bearing on students' day today life as well. The teachers are role models hence their behaviour must be in tandem with achievement of school goals thus students' success. This concurs with findings of Reid, Hopkins and Holly (1987) who reports that students learn well more when a teacher clearly explains and illustrates ideas,

reviews regularly and holds students accountable for work, provides students with enough opportunity to practice, gives prompt feedback to learners, corrects mistakes and allows students to use a skill until it is thoroughly learned and become automatic overtime.

In a school where school-culture is strong and positive, teachers display high levels of planning and organization. The teachers are open to new ideas and more willing to experiment with new method to better meet the needs of their students and have enthusiasm for teaching (Peterson and Deal, 2002). This concurs with Mart (2013) who discloses that commitment is an essential element of successful teaching. Committed teachers are concerned with the development of their students and they activate curiosity and interest in the learners so that they learn. The degree of loyalty that committed teachers have towards their profession is one of their distinguished characters. In general, teachers who are engaged in their profession and committed to students and their learning play a crucial role in the development of the students.

The committed teachers are advisers and counselors of students' behaviours, democratic classroom facilitators in the teaching and learning process and well conversant with the subject matters and have trust on schools' activities and are always guided by the teaching lesson-plan (Lepper, 2019). This agrees with Hopkins (2001) who narrates that teachers with high level of commitment will contribute much to students' academic achievement.

The schools can be categorised as performing or non-performing depending on school mean scores in national examinations. There has been an observation that success of an organisation can be attributed to its culture. In this case, a school is not an exception. It has been noted that schools may share some commonalities like infrastructure, qualified teachers, teaching and learning resources, class size, quality or nature of learners but they tend to perform differently. This can to a large extent be attributed to the culture of the school. The findings of a study by

Peters and Waterman (1982) found that without exception, the dominance and coherence of culture proved to be an essential quality of excellent companies.

The Educational Effectiveness Research (EER) by Reynolds and Sammons (1995) also called School Effectiveness Research (SER) carried out an investigation to find out the impact of schools on students' academic achievement. Luyten (2006, p. 249) defined SER being the line of research that investigates performance between and within schools, as well as malleable factors that enhance school performance. Coleman (1998) and Jencks (1972) initiated research on education effectiveness. Their findings were that schools have little effect on students' outcomes. They strongly argue that students' ability and social background have greater impact on students' academic achievement than school level factors. Regardless of the findings, some scholars have strongly disagreed with Coleman (1998) and Jencks (1972) by arguing that the findings are unreliable as a result of improper statistical operations during that period. It is argued by Liu (2006), that both Coleman and Jencks undermined the hierarchical data. Luyten (2006) reports that later from 1979, onwards, SER gained prominence to the extent it had attracted political support.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to (Bank, World Development Report (2002) for decades, the importance of education has changed radically and this holds true for the opportunities the level of education offers to an individual person as well as the role it plays in the economic and social development of nations. According to MoEST (2008, p. 15) in providing secondary education to a progressively growing proportion of the school going age group, the Malawi Government intends to prepare wage bill for students and self-employment in both the formal and informal sectors.

Additionally, the government intends to prepare some of the students for tertiary and higher education in various fields. According to MoEST (2013) for the past two years, the government spent over MK12 billion on secondary education alone. Regardless of the government's effort to pump in more funds in the education sector to ensure that quality education is imparted to the students; performance at National Examinations in some secondary schools has been appalling while in other schools, has been excellent. However, in developing countries, it is viewed that abject poverty has exacerbated poor performance in most schools.

As clearly stated in Maslowski (2001) general analysis, students' school performance and achievement are being influenced by absence of responsible and clear school-culture, teachers' commitment, and lack of students' interest, motivation, study techniques, lack of awareness of parents as to how they could follow up their school children, lack of teachers covering textbook contents, using teaching aids in a classroom. Lerra and Teka (2014) also noted that there was lack of school leadership support, commitment, incentives, understanding and weak collaboration of stakeholders. According to (Enzewu, 1983) school-culture refers to the social context and social climate of the school. Social context refers to the students, teachers and all those working in a school set-up system whereas social climate refers to norms and values that characterise a certain school. Regardless of all these possible factors that affect learners' performance, limited research has been done so far.

It is against this background that the researcher sought to investigate the influence of school-culture on students' learning in secondary schools in Malawi through case studies in CWED. This study was therefore conceived to fill this information gap.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of school-culture on students' learning in schools in Central West Education Division (CWED) in Malawi. In order to achieve this purpose, this study came up with the main research question and sub-research questions as follows:

1.5 Main Research Question

What role does school-culture play on students' performance in secondary schools?

1.6 Sub-Research Questions

The study posed sub-research questions as follows:

1. Do schools operate in the same environment?

2. What are the school-culture factors that contribute to high or low performance in secondary schools?

3. How do the school-culture factors contribute to high or low performance in secondary schools?

4. How can bad school-culture factors be improved to mitigate low performance in secondary schools?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The Malawi government aims at offering quality education to its citizenry for positive national development. This study is, therefore very essential in exploring how successful secondary schools construct and nurture their cultures so that low performing schools would emulate. It

would have been proved futile to suggest alternative practices that are needed in the construction and nurturing of school-cultures that support teaching and learning in secondary schools. The study would also equip the researcher and school leaders with skills that would lead to construction of school-culture that leads to success of a school. The researcher would also seek for courses that promote good leadership style in schools that promote teaching and learning.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Neo-classical management theory as the theoretical framework. The Neo-classical management theory has some components that are holistically applied in organisations like a school. These are presented in details in the sub-sections below.

1.8.1 Neo-classical Management Theory

The theory was developed by George Elton Mayo between 1890 and 1949. The theory was developed to address the limitations of the Classical theory. The Classical approach to managing an organisation focusses on productivity of members of the organisation at the expense of their welfare in an organisation. According to Gupta (1992) managing an organisation using Classical approach leads to workers resisting the management of an organisation. The Neo-classical approach embraces Human relations theory (HRT) as it emphasises first on the welfare of the workers and then organisation, then output being improved productivity.

The assumption of Neo-classical theory is that productivity of an organisation can only improve when workers have job satisfaction. It is against this background of motivation as an element of school-culture that this study wishes to evaluate its impact on students' performance. This is also practical to a school setting. If a school is to perform to the expected standards, there must be effective communication from the school leader to the subordinates and also the welfare of the workers must be a priority. The school leader must be knowledgeable on what motivates people

to perform to the expected standards and how workers feel under given conditions as this affects performance.

The Neo-classical theory argues that interrelationships within the group members are a necessary aspect at the organisation settings. In an organisation, workers or departments do not work in isolation. All their efforts are targeted at achieving an organisation's goals. This is practical to a school setting too. Similarly, in a school, it calls for collaboration in planning and running of school affairs. This gives a sense of ownership of the school to the stakeholders. For example, in order for the students to do well in the school, there is need of team work among the teachers as well as the students.

For example, a school has departments that work as a team to ensure that students perform well in all the subjects and get chance to be selected for tertiary education. If one department relaxes on teaching and learning, students fail to get selected for tertiary education. This assertion concurs with Caramela (2018) who argues that in order for an organisation to improve its performance, it is essential that all workers in the organisation are playing their expected roles to ensure team effort. Caramela (2018) argues that in cases where other workers are doing more or less than others, there is always a shift of the burden on few and this negatively affects both operations and productivity of an organisation.

The Neo-classical theory has established that there is a relationship between work environment and productivity. In the event that workers work with good support from the organisation, productivity increases. It also believes in that availability of a supervisor at a work place, enhances productivity. This is applicable to the school as well. In order to improve students' performance at a school, teachers and students need to teach and learn in an environment that is supportive to teaching and learning. The leadership style of the school must be instructional and

not autocratic. This increases chances of success to a school as both teachers and students get motivated and geared towards achievement of the expected standards.

In a school, where working environment is good, teachers tend to get dedicated to duty as such boosting performance in the school unlike where the working environment is bad. The school leader must also be on the check on the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

The theory emphasizes on need of orientation of the members of the organisation to their roles in an organisation in order to improve performance and productivity of an organisation. The theory argues that for workers to work efficiently and effectively, the supervisors need to orient them on their job specifications and descriptions to ensure that they work according to the expected standards. The workers need to get clear instructions from the supervisor so that they do exactly what is required. Similarly, in a school, a school leader must ensure that there is effective communication in the school. Teachers and students must be aware of what is expected of them at all the times. In the event that the school has received new staff or student or both, there is need for orientation to such new members of the school by the Head-teacher or school management or any school staff member. A culture of orienting new members in a school makes new members get acquainted to the school much easier and be able to discharge his or her duties with easiness.

The Neo-classical theory assumes that there are two types of workers. This concurs with Robbinson (2010) who argues that there are two types of individuals in an organisation. Some workers are trustworthy, hardworking and responsible while others are untrustworthy, lazy and lack initiative to take responsibility. The workers who are lazy, untrustworthy and irresponsible are well managed by autocratic type of leadership. They work under very close supervision and guided on what to do. Similarly in a school, teachers are of two categories. Some teachers are

hardworking, trustworthy and responsible while others are lazy, untrustworthy and irresponsible. The teachers who are deemed lazy, untrustworthy and irresponsible must always work under close supervision while those trustworthy, hardworking and responsible, must work with a certain degree of autonomy. According to Mc Gregor and Robbinson (2010) the theory X managers have a negative view of workers and perceive them as untrustworthy, lazy, and lacking the initiative to take responsibility. This renders their leaders more autocratic and rigid in their respective approach. They view employees with low or no motivation to take initiative by their own, hence require set of direction to execute tasks.

This is in contrast with workers who are deemed trustworthy, hardworking and responsible. These workers discharge their duties with a certain degree of autonomy and willing to work on their own. Such workers require democratic leadership practices. Robbinson (2010) postulates that theory "Y" managers regard employees as trustworthy with abilities to take charge of responsibilities and employees are highly self-motivated. The Y-type leaders are democratic and participative in their style and this motivates the employees by involving them actively in their routine tasks. The theory gives a certain degree of autonomy to its workers, hence better productivity. This agrees with Festejo (2012) who argues that employees tend to perform better when allowed to exhibit their creativity without any restriction.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The Neo-classical theory which guided this study was supported by elements of school-culture by Fyans (1990). This conceptual framework acted as the lens for investigating the nature of school-culture in the schools involved in the study. School-culture comprises several concepts of elements that are linked together that result in a conceptual framework. According to Maxwell (2015), a conceptual framework is a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and

theories that support and inform particular research. Other scholars have defined a conceptual framework as a total and logical orientation and associations of anything and everything that forms the underlying thinking, structures, plans and practices and implementation of the entire research project. It can, therefore, be concluded that conceptual framework is the logical conceptualisation of the entire research project. The logical conceptualisation means that a conceptual framework is a metacognitive, reflective and operational element of the entire research process. These elements of school-culture are discussed in details in the sub-sections below:

1.9.1 Elements of Conceptual Framework

Among the elements of school-culture include: Institutional Environment, Interpersonal Relationships/Collegial Support, Curriculum Implementation/ Teacher Quality, Leadership, Student Quality. Each of these elements are discussed in the following sub-sections.

1.9.1.1 Institutional Environment

According to Lezotte (2021) in an effective school there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from threat of physical harm. The indicators may include no cases of strikes, no drugs and substance abuse, no arson, and no other forms of student perpetrated violence. The institutional environment includes physical location, usage of the school environment, creativeness, autonomy, and established norms. There must be job satisfaction and resultant motivation of the individuals.

1.9.1.2 Collegial Support

Gruenert and Valentine (1998, p.24) as well as Gumsel and Eryilmaz (2011) postulate that Collegial support refers to the extent to which teachers trust and work together to achieve the objectives of the school. The concept encompasses mutual sharing and assistance; an orientation

towards the school as a whole; and is spontaneous, voluntary, development oriented, unscheduled, and unpredictable.

It portrays how members of the school community relate to each other. There must be good working relationship among all school departments, teachers and students, teachers and other stakeholders. Parents meetings must be made regularly in the school at least on termly basis monitoring and appreciating the school routine activities especially academic and development-oriented activities beside their own Parent and Teacher Association meetings.

1.9.1.3 Teacher Quality

This focuses on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Do the teachers have mastery of subject matter and are the students able to grasp the concepts taught? The teacher attitude is another important factor to be considered in curriculum interpretation. Ezewu (1983) posits that the feeling that a teacher has towards his or her work, for example, the working conditions including salaries. Teachers with positive attitude towards work promote or encourage schooling of children.

1.9.1.4 Leadership Style

Schools tend to do well if an appropriate leadership style is adopted. According to Lydia and Nansongo (2009) the ideal leadership style that promotes success of a school is instructional leadership and this leadership style organises the process of teaching and learning to ensure that the mission of a school is achieved. This concurs with Lezotte (2001) who postulates that the core role of the instructional leader is to ensure the achievement of the established mission through creating a good environment for the schools.

The instructional leadership focuses on how school administrators motivate teachers and students, goal setting, delegation and involvement in decision making. Ezewu (1983) narrates

that leadership style of the school head has an important impact on school quality. The Head-teacher who guides and helps teachers shows compassion in satisfying the social needs of teachers, sets rules and regulations but at the same time flexibility allows leadership acts to emerge from teachers and even sets examples by working hard to motivate the teachers to work hard and this will likely affect performance positively.

1.9.1.5 Quality of Students

This relates to nature of students in relation to performance, commitment and efficiency regarding classroom curricular activities and home assignments. According to Enzewu (1983) the most influential characteristic of the school that impact on schooling is the attitude of the learners towards their teachers and towards schooling. All schools have culture which constitutes some elements. The elements of school-culture are represented in the diagram below as the conceptual framework's illustration:

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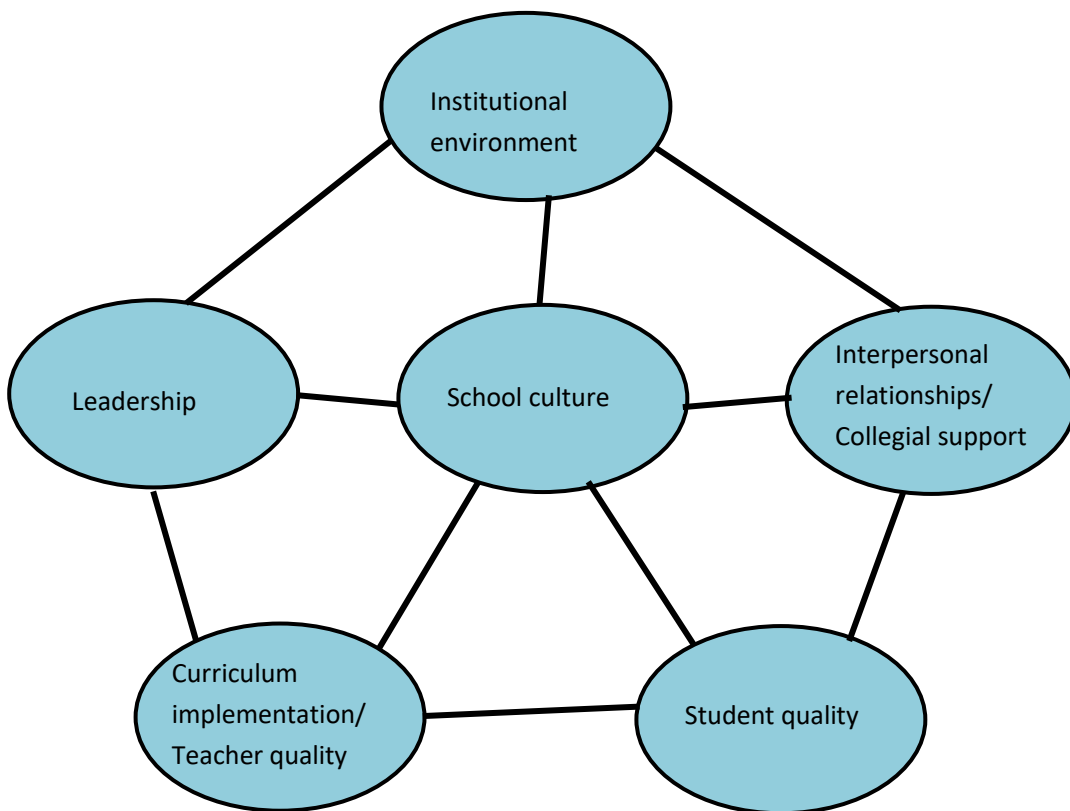
1.10 Assumption of the Study

There is a link between school-culture and student's learning that impacts on academic performance so there is need to establish it.

1.11 Operational Definition of Terms

School-culture: refers to norms and routines in the school

i. Toxic culture: environment that is dominated by practices, policies and management style that perpetuate unwelcome developments and conflicts among team members.

ii. Curriculum: the subjects comprising of a course of study in a school or college.

iii. Curriculum implementation: teaching and learning process

iv. Effective school: school in a safe environment with qualified teachers ready to assist learners.

v. Collegial support: environment where responsibility and authority are equally shared by colleagues.

vi. Institutional environment: this refers to atmosphere within the school

vii. Student quality: this refers to nature of students

viii. Goal setting: the process of taking active steps to achieve your desired outcome.

ix. Instructional leadership: management of curriculum and instruction by a school leader through definition of expectations, promotion of positive school-culture, promotion of positive school learning environment, resourcefulness and good leadership skills.

x. Board of Governors: Team of qualified people responsible for overseeing and managing an institution.

1.12 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters. All the chapters open with an insight of the chapter and end with a summary. The first chapter gives the background information of the study, states the research problem, the purpose of the study, presents the main research question, sub-research questions, significance of the study, theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the study, assumption of the study and how the thesis is structured.

Chapter two comprises literature reviewed by various authors regarding school-culture. The concepts culture and school-culture are defined. The importance of school-culture has been stated and some elements of school-culture. The chapter also explains about effective schools and other studies on students' performance. The factors that affect performance of students and possible solutions have also been highlighted.

Chapter three explains about research methodology. It also gives an explanation of research design, research site, sample, population, sample, sampling techniques, data collection techniques and tools. The chapter also highlights data analysis, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter four presents research findings and their discussions. The chapter describes the nature of sampled schools in terms of environment, resources availability, management, general summary of the characteristics of the sampled schools, and characteristics of population involved in the study. Chapter five presents summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study to different stakeholders and area for further research.

1.13 Summary

The chapter presents the overview of the study, background information to the study, problem statement, purpose of the study. It also presents main research and sub-research questions. It also presents the significance of the study, theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have guided

the study. the assumption of the study has also been highlighted, operational definition of terms in the study and the structure of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter accounts for literature aligning the influence of school-culture to students' learning in different schools. This chapter highlights key issues regarding school-culture and how it correlates with students' academic performance. The literature has expounded how school-culture has been defined, characteristics of an efficient and effective school-culture. A detailed review of each and every thematic sub-topic relevant to the study is examined.

2.2 Meaning of Culture

Before broadly analysing school-culture, there is need to have an insight into the concept culture. There are several definitions of culture put forward by different authors. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) explain culture as the social glue that holds people together. They further postulate that it is culture that guides us when to be tensed and when to relax and rewards us for acting appropriately, usually in the form of greater security, more self-esteem, or access to inside information and this concurs with the assertion by Saphia and King (2008) who explain that the concept culture refers to a set of common values, attitudes, beliefs and norms some of which are explicit and others are implicit. Each and every organisation has its own culture. The organisation culture is expounded in details in the sub-section below:

2.3 Organisation Culture

According to Shein (2011) an organisational culture is a set of shared values, beliefs and norms that influence the way the employees think, feel and behave in the workplace. Kandulu (2006) indicates that the key to good performance in an organisation, is a strong culture; a positive and strong culture can make an average individual perform and achieve brilliantly unlike a negative

and weak culture which may demotivate an outstanding employee to underperform and end up with no achievement.

According to Nelson and Quick (2011) organisational culture serves the following core functions: It gives members a sense of identity, increases their commitment, reinforces organisational values and serves as a control mechanism for shaping behaviour. On the same note, however, Watson (2012) warns that if the culture is not hospitable to learning, then student achievement can suffer. Organisational culture is a delicate device that has a huge bearing on the performance of an organisation. It therefore, calls for an astute manager to construct and nurture a good culture that may lead to high productivity in the organisation. This is echoed by Fink and Resnick (2001) who postulates that school principals are responsible for establishing a pervasive culture of teaching and learning in each school. Barth (2001) reports that the first major purpose of a school is to create and provide a culture that is hospitable to human learning. A school is an organisation; therefore, each school has its own culture and school-culture has been described in details in the sub-section below:

2.4 School-culture

School-culture can be explained in various contexts. Saphia and King (1985) in Stoll and Fink (1996) view that school-culture involves the following norms in a school: shared goals, responsibility for success, collegiality, continuous improvement support, mutual respect, openness and humour and lifelong. Peters and Waterman (1982) are also in support of Huberman (2016) who expounds that school-culture is an agglomeration of several sub- cultures. He further explains that school-culture is formed by cultures of pupils, teachers, administration, non-teaching staff and parents.

The definition of school-culture by the National School Climate Council (NSCC) concurs with Hubberman's (1992) definition. The NSCC defines school-culture as patterns of peoples' experiences of school life that reflect norms, goals, interpersonal relationship, teaching and learning practices and organisation structure. There is another worthy definition of school-culture stated by Hargreaves. Hargreaves (1992) in Stoll and Fink (1995) describes school-culture as how things are and acts as a screen or lens through which the world is viewed. This defines reality for those within the school, gives them support and identity and forms a framework for occupational learning. This concurs with Whitaker and Gruenert (2015) as they argue that school-culture is developed by unspoken norms, that direct the things we do and the way we act. Howard (1978) concurs with Hargreaves as he defines school-culture as an atmosphere for learning. The school-culture includes feelings people have about the school and whether it is a place where learning can occur.

There is need to develop a positive school-culture in the school. A positive school-culture makes the school a place where both staff and students want to spend a substantial portion of their time as it is a good place to be. Schein (2010) concurs with Howard (1978) and indicates that culture involves a set of shared meanings that makes it possible for members of a group to interpret and act upon their environment. In a school setting, this is directly linked to the school's mission, vision and motto. This is what the community, students, staff and parents believe is important to the success of all involved in learning. This, therefore, intends to suggest that school-culture is a collection of behaviours that lead to the success or failure of learners academically. This is echoed by Yalew (2010) who reprimands that toxic cultural practices and norms exist in some schools. These practices hinder academic achievement of students in schools.

The school-culture can, therefore, be defined as a school's way of life that embraces norms, beliefs, values, attitudes and traditions. It gives direction to how the school works and it intends to achieve. The positive school-culture targets at achieving academic excellence as this creates a conducive environment where teachers effectively teach and learners express their zeal to learn as they feel well supported by the school environment.

School-culture is a critical ingredient in the establishment of successful learning environments. Cleveland (2008) state that school-culture provides the most significant educational foundation for successful student achievement. According to Rooney (2005) a school with a wholesome culture knows what it believes in and where it is going. The school-culture sets the tone of a school. In general terms, a school that is characterised by a culture of positive relationships has long been a symbol of success. However, it is not an easy thing to establish positive relationships in schools that used to have a negative school-culture. This concurs with Hyslop (2004) who postulates that creating a culture that stresses significant relationships will require significant change in many high schools around the country. Each school-culture has its dimensions and these dimensions are diverse. The dimensions of school-culture are discussed in details in the sub-section below:

2.5 Dimensions of School-Culture

Craig and Lundberg (2019) postulate that culture peculiar to a school seems to have dimensions that are diverse in nature and this is backed by the findings. They were cited in Aydin (2018) who put forward that school-culture consists of at least four dimensions. These dimensions are in levels. Aydin (2018) indicates that the first level constitutes of cultural productions and oral productions. The second level constitutes the perspectives of the people, the third one includes the school's values and the fourth level includes assumptions.

Culture dimensions may be analysed in various aspects. It can be analysed in terms of what the culture surrounding the school environment advocates, the nature of the people surrounding the school environment, the core values of the school and traditional beliefs. All the cultures can be analysed and interpreted. School-culture analysis and interpretation has been described in the sub-section below:

2.6 Analysis and Interpretation of School-Culture

According to Hoy and Miskel (1987) school-culture can be analysed and interpreted. This can be done by use of symbols, events, rites, ceremonies, icons, heroes, myths, traditions, legends peculiar to the schools. This concurs with Aydin (2018) who narrates that while identifying school-culture, question such as which traditions have still been followed by the school, whether are there any teachers or students whose characteristics and what they did have still been remembered can be asked to obtain information about the history of the school. He further explains about beliefs of the school though not being stated directly, questions like what assumptions are shared by the teachers and other people present at school and how their ways of thinking may be asked.

Hoy and Miskel (1987) further explain about how values assist in analysing and interpreting school-culture. They indicate that questions like what rewards and what things are looked up by the school can be asked. The norms and standards, behaviours that are awarded and punished may be examined while determining the norms and standards shaping behaviours at school, the behavioural patterns, traditions and ceremonies may also attract questions about which ones are approved and repeated by everyone. The school-culture is of great significance. The importance of school-culture is explained in sub-section below:

2.7 Importance of School-culture

According to Jerald (2006) sociologists have seen the importance of school-culture as early as the 1930s, but it was until the 1970s that educational researchers began to draw direct links between the quality of a school's climate and its educational outcomes and this concurs with Havard University researcher Ron Edmonds, often regarded as the father of ''effective schools'' movement included ''safe, orderly climate conducive to learning'' on his influential list of school level factors associated with higher student achievement. ''The school's atmosphere is orderly without being rigid,'' he observed, ''quiet without being oppressive, and generally conducive to the instructional business at hand.'' Yet despite its importance, organisational culture is possibly the last discussed element in practical conversation about how to improve student achievement.

Peters and Waterman (1982) postulate that success of an organisation can be attributed to its culture. The school-culture dictates the daily school's routines. The culture may either enhance or stifle growth. If the teachers are inclined to school-culture, they easily follow daily events in the school. They may also know how their school strives for continuous improvement. Schultz (1994) reports that the aim of interpreting school-culture is to understand the symbols and meanings as they have been created by the members of the culture and this agrees with what Peter and Waterman discovered in 1982. Peter and Waterman (2019) discovered that companies that excelled had distinctive cultures and were inherited through story and slogan. It serves as a motivating factor for employees by giving meaning to their work.

Prokopchuk (2016) concurs with the assertion by Peter and Waterman (2019) and reports that the way in which school leaders support teacher leadership and collaboration, view the importance of professional development, develop a common vision that involves students, teachers and

community and communicate effectively; influence the culture of the school and the nature of relationships within the school.

School-culture brings orderliness and discipline in the school. For it to be more effective, there is need to set clearly defined rules that must be enforced fairly and consistently. If this is done, it communicates a sense of seriousness and purpose with which the school approaches its tasks. This eventually improves success of the learners. Maslowski (2001) in general analysis is in agreement with other scholars and states that students' school performance and achievement is influenced by absence of responsible and clear school-culture, teachers' commitment and lack of students' interest, motivation, study techniques, lack of awareness of parents as how to follow up school children, lack of teachers covering text book contents, using teaching aids in class rooms, absence of school co-operation, and lack of hardworking students in the school and classrooms. This denotes that parents have a role to play to influence their children performance in the school.

According to Sergiovanni (1994) as cited in Ozdemir (2012) indicates that school-culture helps in realising common purposes as it takes a leading role and forms the norms concerning what things are expected to be accomplished. A school-culture comprising common purposes is required to be formed for students to be successful and to continue their success.

All the scholars hinge on the significance of school-culture. It is therefore apparent that school-culture needs to be well constructed, nurtured and adhered to if consistent positive results are to be achieved. The positive school-culture encompasses a strong instructional leadership style, team work, cordial relationships like teacher-teacher, teacher-student, student-student and teacher-parent, explicit high standards, assessment aligned with stated standards, clear and shared vision, commitment to teaching and learning for effective curriculum implementation for

better outcomes. School-cultures can either be toxic or positive. The toxic and strong positive school-cultures are discussed in sub-sections below:

2.8 Toxic School-Cultures

Toxic school-culture refers to an environment that is dominated by practices, policies and management styles that perpetuate unwelcome developments and conflicts among team members. Peterson and Deal (2002, p.3) indicates that toxic school-cultures lack vision, value laziness and apathy, appreciate separatedness and exclusivity, and have negative peer relationships. According to Gruenert and Whitaker (2015, p.21) these cultures hinge on failure and use of an excuse to remain stagnant. Toxic school-culture leads to poor performance in schools. Gruenert and Whitaker further postulate that toxic school-cultures encourage individuals to see failures as the inevitable results of circumstances outside of their control rather than as opportunities for improvement. This type of behaviour typically leads to bullying behaviours.

According to Bradshaw (2014, p.597) indicate that person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to emotion on the part of one or more than other persons. Bullying often occurs in situations where there is a power or status difference. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015, p.59) inform that teachers and faculty tend to zero in on the weak aspects of the administration and the school's procedures and in return use those performances to legitimise his or her negative behaviours. According to Gruenert and Whitaker (2015, p.61) energetic collaborations aligning with the goal of promoting and encouraging all students to succeed, or are the teachers collaborating to focus on what is going to be most beneficial to him or her? Of course, not all teachers and faculty within a toxic school-culture share the same mindset.

Although teachers and students who have never experienced a different type of culture will assume that toxic culture is what is normal. According to Deal and Peterson (2018) the elements

of toxic culture may include either of the following: negative values and beliefs, no shared sense of purpose, negative relationships, destructive individuals or groups, no sense of trust or caring, and few positive rituals or ceremonies to build a sense of community and hopefulness. For a school to prosper, there is need for establishment of a strong and positive school-culture. A strong and positive school-culture is explained in the sub-section below:

2.9 Strong and Positive School-Culture

A school leader takes strides to make sure that a good school climate is established to ensure that teaching and learning take place in the school that may lead to academic excellence. School-culture can be constructed and nurtured well through school leadership. Koker and Yeniceri (2013) inform that the school leadership is responsible for creation of a common vision, placing importance on cooperation and a common participation in administration, and having effective communication with people working in the school. This is echoed by Gumuseli (2006) who postulates that the first thing that a principal should do on school-culture is to create a strong school-culture.

School administration is responsible for the formation and conservation of a strong school-culture to a greater extent. The school principal should therefore know what elements are forming the culture and must define the school by analysing it within that knowledge. This implies that the school leader must be able to sift through the school-culture as such all sub-cultures that look detrimental to the school may be shrugged off.

A strong and positive school-culture establishes common goals in the schools. The goals are shared among people working in the same environment and teachers get motivated to work. In such schools, leaders take a role in celebrating students' and teachers' success through some well organised ceremonies. The school leader may organise a party or a trip to an area of interest so

that the teachers and students can appreciate the new environment and get motivated in the long run. This school-culture provides an enabling environment for high performance in the schools. The attitude of people in the school also contributes to the shaping of school-culture. The sub-section below explains how attitudes of people in the school shape school-culture.

2.10 Attitudes of People in the School

Goldring and Knox (2002) posit that people within the schools have beliefs, traditions, attitudes and relationships that shape the culture. This comprises who contribute to creating a school-culture and how this culture is established and how it can be transformed. Harrison (2013) also concurs that attitudes of people in the school are the most influential characteristics of the school-culture that impact on the performance of the students. The attitudes can be of teachers' or learners towards their work or schooling respectively.

Teacher attitude refers to feelings a teacher has towards his or her work given working conditions. The conditions may include salaries among others. Harrison (2013) informs that the implication remains teachers with positive attitude towards work promote or encourage students' learning. The positive attitude in the school builds it and the school succeeds in its activities and negative attitude destroys it leading to poor performance. Besides the attitude of people in the school, relationships in the school have a bearing on the school-culture. The impact of relationships on school-culture is described in the sub-section below:

2.11 Relationships in the School

Bowen (1998) indicates that a school environment in which students feel safe and teachers viewed supportive has a positive impact on the student's sense of cohesion and, along with some factors like school size and the relationship between and among staff, might serve to ameliorate other factors that placed students at risk for school performance and Coleman (1961) concurs

with Bowen (1998) that a positive school climate is a critical dimension of behavioural risk prevention., health promotion efforts and the process of teaching and learning eventually may lead to high performance. In a school where members relate well, team spirit and collaboration in various issues is done. This leads to informed decision making and success of the school. In addition to all this, orderliness and discipline also play an important role on school-culture. The effectiveness of orderliness and discipline are discussed in details in the sub-section below:

2.12 Orderliness and Discipline

This is another factor that has an effect on teaching and learning. Barks (1960) states that there is need to establish clear rules that must be enforced fairly and consistently. When fairly enforced rules are practised in schools, a sense of seriousness and purpose is delivered with which the school approaches its tasks. This improves academic achievement of learners. On the contrary, Yalew (2010) postulates that some schools have toxic cultural practices and norms. These cultural practices are reflected in different ways and degrees in secondary schools. Such cultural practices and norms hinder academic achievement of the learners in schools. It is however advisable that when formulating rules and regulations in the school, consultations must be made with various stakeholders so that they develop a sense of ownership to the rules and regulations. The other factor that defines school-culture better is how the school leader sets the school's goals. The significance of goal setting is expounded in details in the sub-section below:

2.13 Goal Setting

There is need to set clear goals with high expectation to define purposes and agreement between teachers and learners on school priorities to influence school outcomes. When the goals are clearly defined, they are easier to accomplish as both teachers and learners know what is expected of them. They both get committed towards achieving the stipulated goals. Smith and

Brain, (2000) acknowledge that social culture or school climate has been shown to influence a spectrum of students' outcomes from social-emotional functioning and behaviour to grades and academic performance like a caring and positive school climate. Conversely, peer interactions like the level of teasing and bullying have an impact on student performance. Hoy and Sweetland (2001) concur with the scholars' findings and affirm that relationships among school staff, more especially the level of trust, have an effect on student outcomes. Much as the factors above help to define school-culture, there is need to know whether the school is effective or not. It is only an effective school that is good at goal setting. The characteristics of effective schools are explained in the sub-section below:

2.14 Characteristics of Effective Schools

According to Schreens (2018, p. 18) school effectiveness is generally defined as the performance of the organisational unit called 'school'. Several economic regions and individual countries have used research findings to list various key factors that make a school effective. Reynolds (2011) and Ninan (2006) indicate that school effectiveness is dependent on school processes that result in noticeable positive results among students steadily over a given period. This disagrees with Reid, Hopkins and Hoy, (1987); Uline, Miller and Tschannen-Moran (2017) who indicate that nonetheless, school effectiveness has been hard to conceptualise because is a complicated construct.

According to Beteille, Kalogrides and Lab's (2009) they express that effective School Literature recognises several features of effective schools which include the quality of teaching force and leadership. "Some scholars have provided a comprehensive spectrum of correlates of school effectiveness as used in the United States, the United Kingdom as follows: effective, professional and strong instructional school leadership, explicit high standards, clear and shared vision, high

levels of collaboration and communication, curriculum, instruction and assessment aligned with stated standards, effective teaching thus with high concentration and frequent monitoring, focussed on staff development, supportive learning and high level of family and community involvement" Sammons and Hillman (1995), Shannon and Bylsma (2007) and Teddle and Stringfield (2007).

Studies of effective schools have aligned a number of cultural elements that seem to have positive impact on student achievement. Fyans and Maehr (1990) singled out academic challenges, a sense of community, recognition for achievement and perception of school goals as salient variables. Senge (1990) and Fullan (1992) point to the significance of shared vision championed by a stronger leader with a sense of moral purpose. The bottom line of these ingredients of school-culture is to increase an environment conducive to learning. This study however emphasises on characteristics of a successful school-culture that were coined by Brown (2004). These attributes include among the following:

An inspiring vision, backed by a clear, limited and challenging mission, curriculum, modes of instruction, assessments and learning opportunities that are clearly linked to the vision and mission and tailored to the needs and interests of the students, adequate time for teachers and students to do their work thoroughly, a pervasive focus on student and teacher learning, coupled with continual, school-wide conversation about the quality of every one's work, a close, supportive teacher-student and student-student relationships, many opportunities and venues for creating culture, discussing fundamental values, taking responsibility, teaming as a community and celebrating individual and group success, leadership that encourages and protects trust, on-the-job learning, flexibility, risk taking, innovation and adaptation to change, data-driven decision-making systems that draw on timely, accurate, qualitative and quantitative information

about progress toward the vision and sophisticated knowledge about an organisational change, and unwavering support from parents.

As regards to the stated characteristics, it is beyond reasonable doubt that a stronger instructional culture is within reach of any committed leader. School-culture does not come out of the blues. It is constructed. "The school leaders must develop necessary steps to build a stronger culture in their own schools. This can be done by consistently observing teachers at work more often, emulating strong school instructional leaders' leadership styles. It is believed that dramatic improvements in instructional culture are possible and to some extent within a year. The keys are to diagnose areas for improvement in instructional culture, create and consistently implement an action plan based on the success of nearby schools, and monitor progress throughout the year" (Greenhouse Schools, 2012.pdf).

Different researchers agree on these correlates though Ostroff and Schmitt (1993) have the assertion that the measures of school effectiveness that endeavour to contain these variables are complicated and challenging to administer. This implies that all these variables correlate including others not listed may not be studied together to give an impressive picture of school effectiveness. Schreeen (2018) observes that despite different viewpoints, a moderate simple schema, comprising a set of flexible schooling conditions known as causes and a small range of types of criteria regarded as effects, may be regarded as the basis of the definition for school effectiveness. Uline, Miller and Tschannen-Moran (1998, p. 462) narrate that where schools are concerned, the measures used most often are standardised tests of students' achievement because virtually everyone agrees that mastery of basic skills is an important component of school effectiveness.

It is noted that school values differ from school to school. It is therefore of great significance to study school-cultures of various schools and assess how they influence students' learning.

In Malawian context, the vision of education sector is to catalyse socioeconomic development, expansion of industries and a tool for the empowerment, the poor, the weak and the voiceless (MoEST, 2008). The main mission is to provide quality and relevant education to the country. It therefore follows that education in Malawi should enable people acquire relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for self-advancement and socio-economic development of the country. There are factors that affect performance of students in schools. Some of the factors are discussed in the sub-sections below:

2.15 Factors Affecting Performance of Students

Waters and Marzano (2006) indicate that there is a range of factors that have an effect on the quality of performance of students. A series of variables are considered to identify the effective factors regarding the quality of academic success. It is not easy to identify most contributing variables in quality of academic performance. Among the factors include the following:

2.15.1 Different Family Backgrounds

Children from well to do families tend to have a better education background as they start school at a very tender age in kindergarten schools unlike if a child is born in a poor family. They have to wait until they clock at least six years to start standard one to join public schools. This makes children from well to do family to have an advantage over the latter in performance in school. Besides that, the educated parents value education more than uneducated parents. The educated parents source out resources that would assist in education of their children unlike uneducated parents.

As a corrective measure, the government, schools, teachers and parents need to source out more sponsorship for needy students to make sure that they meet all the needs in the schools. There is need for the government to advocate a policy of Education for All (EFA) and education must be offered for free. The parents need to invest more on education of their children.

2.15.2 Gender of the Learner

There is a myth that girls cannot perform better than girls. This makes the girls develop low self-esteem and fail to compete favourably with their counterparts. As a corrective measure, families must be civic educated on the significance of education and that girls can perform equally as boys.

2.15.3 Size of Families

Some larger family sizes fail to support education of their children. This makes them drop out of school or get married at a very tender age. As a corrective measure, the government must advocate a policy of not more than three children per family for easy support of their education and parents need to invest more in their education so that are well supported.

2.15.4 Environment of the Household

Some students reside in environments that are hostile not favourable for learning. The students tend to over work on household chores as such become exhaustive and less attentive in class hence poor performance. As a corrective measure, victim support units must be made available at various points to ensure that students report issues that affect their education through inhumane treatments in the households.

2.15.5 Teacher Related Factors

Some schools have teachers who are under-qualified, inexperienced and unqualified. These teachers fail to discharge their duties accordingly hence poor performance in the schools. As a

corrective measure, the government needs to deploy qualified and effective teachers in the schools so that they discharge their services with diligence.

2.15.6 School Related Factors

Schools may be public, private or grant aided. Some schools may require school tuition and boarding that may be exorbitant to the students hence may drop out of school. School might also have poor infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning materials. Much as there are a myriad of factors that affect performance of learners negatively, the school community can make a deliberate effort to ensure that some infrastructure can be constructed within the school like teachers' houses, library, laboratories and acquisition of teaching and learning materials.

2.16 Summary

Basing on the literature reviewed, school-culture constitutes whatever happens in the school and whatever the students, staff and parents believe in at a given school. The importance of school-culture and elements of school-culture have also been highlighted. The relationships among teachers, students and parents coupled with orderliness of school activities have an impact on the performance of the students. In schools where there is effective teaching and learning, students perform well unlike where the teachers are ineffective. Effective teachers will generally make schools effective. Some studies carried out on how schools perform in relation to others have also been highlighted.

The dimensions, analysis and interpretation of school-culture have also been highlighted. The strong and positive school-culture has also been analysed. The international studies on school performance have also been highlighted portraying that schools perform differently. The factors affecting students' performance and their possible remedies have also been highlighted.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at investigating the influence of school-culture on students' learning in high and low performing schools, it also explains the research methodology, which this research study deployed to obtain the expected outcomes to the research questions in an apt manner. Kazdin (2003) defines methodology as the principles, procedures and practices that govern research.

The aim of methodology is to describe approaches to, kinds and paradigm of research. It, therefore, follows that the methodological aim is to describe approaches to kinds and paradigms of research. Kaplan (1973) concurs that the aim of methodology is to enable us understand in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific enquiry but the process itself. It, therefore, implies that methodology is thought to encompass the entire process of conducting research.

Kothari (2004) describes methodology as encompassing a number of issues such as why a research study has been undertaken. It comprises research design, the study population, research site, research paradigm, method of data collection and tools and methods of data analysis. The research methodology therefore is about getting to know and understand research guiding parameters thoroughly. This section details how the study was approached. The methodology, sampling, data collection procedure, tools and data analysis were articulated.

This research is underpinned by Interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm correlates with qualitative research approach. The philosophy of interpretivism bases on the principle which states that the researcher performs a specific role in observing the social world. Myers (2008) Saunders (2012) postulate that the adoption of the interpretivism paradigm provides in depth understanding of certain contexts such as cross-cultural studies, factors influencing certain development through collection and interpretation of qualitative data leading to deep insight and

conclusions that may differ from others. Myers (2008) concurs with Myers et al. (2012) and postulates that the adoption of the interpretivism paradigm would lead to generalisation of high-level validity in data as it is based on personal contributions with considerations of different variables.

3.2 Research Design

Kazdin (2003) explains research design in reference to the plan used to examine the question of interest. It is the overall plan or structure of a research project. Schneider (2002) concurs with Kazdin (2003) that the research design is the specific plan for studying the research problem and constitutes the blueprint for collecting, measuring and analysing data. The main aim of the research design is to make sure that the information gathered throughout the research responds to the initial question unambiguously. In other terms, the final results and conclusions of the research must correspond with the research problems chosen at the onset of the research.

The research design indicates what type of study is planned and what kind of results are expected. It focuses on final results of the research and becomes very difficult to proceed with a research project without a proper research design. In this study, an in-depth understanding was sought then case study approach looked appropriate. Gliner (2009) reports that the goal of case-study approach is to develop deep understanding of case(s). According to Cohen (2007) they narrate that these strategies usually observe characteristics of an individual for probing information and analysing intensively the multifarious phenomena. The study involved case study design. It gives an in-depth understanding of various cultures of successful and non-successful schools from participants' views and observation. Thomas (2011) defines case study design yields holistic understanding of cultural systems of action.

In this case, school-culture of the sampled schools is understood in-depth and can assist in generalisation of the findings across the borders. The case studies are a multi-perspective analyses, which means the researcher considered not just voices and perspectives of individual actors, but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interactions between and among them. This enables findings to bring trustworthiness to this research. The researcher used qualitative research method. Strauss and Corbin (1990) delineate qualitative research as any research not primarily based on counting or quantifying empirical material. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.11) define qualitative research as the research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures nor other means of quantification.

The method focuses on the understanding of a particular phenomenon from the perspective of human participants in a natural setting. Schneider (2002) is in agreement with Strauss and Corbin (1990) and states that the method also attempts to tap a deeper meaning of particular human experience intended to generate theoretical richer observations that are difficult to be reduced to numbers and emphasises on depth of understanding associated with ideographic concerns. The method assists to point out the facts or obtaining pertinent and precise information concerning the current status of the phenomena and wherever possible, drawing conclusions from the facts discovered as it concerns itself with the objectives and research questions. Ideally, this assists the researcher to obtain information, summarise and interpret the information for the purpose of clarification.

3.3 Research Site

This study was done in secondary schools in Central West Education Division (CWED). There were four (4) high performing and four (4) low performing secondary schools. The Division was

selected because it had shown big disparity in performance at national examinations at Malawi School Certificate of Education Examination (M.S.C.E.). This was done due to proximity.

3.4 Population

According to Cohen (1977) population consists of the totality or aggregate of the persons with which the researcher is concerned with. It, therefore, follows that population is an accessible group of people which meets a well-defined of eligibility criteria. The target population included of Head-teachers, heads of departments, PTA Executive and some prefects in secondary schools of the Central West Education Division (CWED). This population is relevant to the study because it is directly involved in construction and nurturing of the school-culture.

3.4.1 Sample

Sample is the subset of population involved in the study. It is a small portion of the target population used as a representative of the total population. Sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as a representative of that population. According to Nyabonga (2011) from the sample used, any statement made, should also be true for the population and the larger the sample the smaller the sampling error. The sample used in the study, must also be true for the population in CWED schools and Malawi as a whole. The sample used comprised eight (8) Head-teachers, sixteen (16) Heads of Departments, sixty-four (64) prefects and eight (8) PTA Executives.

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) commenting on sample size, observed that there were certain non-definite practices among social research workers that a beginner can adopt. One such practice suggested that if a population is a few hundreds, a 40% or more will do, and if many hundreds, a 20% will do, if a few thousands, and if several thousands, a 5% or less sample will do.

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used when selecting subjects in the study. All the subjects take a leading role in construction and nurturing of school-culture. The schools that showed disparity in performance were randomly chosen. In Malawi, secondary schools are categorised into four and these are Community Day, Conventional, Grant aided and Private secondary schools. In each category, simple random sampling, two schools were sampled from each category thus high performing and low performing making a total of eight (8).

The results' consistency on Malawi School Certificate of Education by Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) for at least four years guided the purposive selection criteria. Selecting the schools in this way ensured that all secondary schools deemed high performing and low performing are easily identified in Central West Education Division. There was also random sampling of school from those deemed high performing and low performing. This sampling technique gave chance to all the selected schools to be sampled. The sample comprised co-education, single sex, private and public secondary schools. Then all head teachers of 8 sampled schools, 16 heads of departments thus Humanities or Languages and Science department, 8 Parents and Teacher Association (PTA) members and 40 prefects from each of the selected school were involved in the study.

3.5 Data Collection

A multi-method approach was employed in gathering data. Creswell (2003) alludes that the advantages of this approach is that bias and distortions of the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality are eliminated. The data from the selected schools were collected using interviews and class observations (see appendices 1,2,3,4 and 5) and documents analysis.

3.5.1 Data Collection Techniques

The following techniques were utilized in data collection: semi-structured interviews, class observation, focus group discussions (FGDs) and document analysis. These methods were chosen as they were assumed to provide enough data on the influence of school-culture on students' learning in schools. These methods helped in development of multiple understandings and validation of the information on the issue at hand.

3.5.1.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (1977) argue that semi-structured interviews for individuals and groups gather data on the more intangible aspects of the school's culture such as values, assumptions, beliefs, wishes, problems. During interviews, more probing questions may emanate to gather more information on an issue. Robson (2016) echoes that interviews are advantageous in the way that the presence of the interviewer can help to clarify queries from responses and that can stimulate the respondents to give full answers to an on-the-spot supervisor rather than an anonymous researcher known through an introductory letter. In this study, the respondents were able to divulge more information on school missions, visions, mottos, core values and even school leadership styles. In the event where the question looked ambiguous to the respondents, the researcher was posed to rephrase the question. For example, on leadership style in the school, respondents could narrate circumstances and the reaction of leadership in the school.

Glesne (1999) posits that interviews are also useful when respondents have problems with reading and writing. This is because the researcher complements that with non-verbal behaviour to encourage respondents to participate though they are illiterate. In this study, a semi-structured interview, thus with a given agenda and open-ended questions were used to interview participants. The head teachers, heads of departments, and PTA executive members were served with interview guides and focus group discussion was done with the prefects. Group interviews

are used as face-face interviews though look intimidatory to some people especially youthful teachers. But in this regard participants were told to feel free and information provided was meant for academic purpose only. The participants were free to substantiate their responses could need be.

The semi-structured interviews were administered to Head-teachers, Heads of departments, and PTA Executive members. Some of the questions were on school factors affecting performance, some records kept in the school and how stakeholders relate in the school. There were also some probing questions to substantiate the required information. The respondents were given enough time to respond to questions without interruptions and intimidation of any sort. See appendices 1,2,3, and 4.

3.5.1.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are facilitated discussions held with a small group of people who have special knowledge or interest in a particular topic. The FGDs are typically carried out with between six (6) to twelve (12) people. The FGDs are normally based around a short list of guiding questions, designed to probe more for in-depth information. The FGDs may last between one hour and two hours.

The FGDs are meant to seek views for those willing or able to speak up at larger group meetings. They may also assist in seeking views of the minority or disadvantaged groups like women, children or people with disabilities. This study involved five (5) prefects from each school translating to forty (40) prefects in all who were sampled. The respondents were asked to feel free and the respondent willing to respond was supposed to raise a hand so that could be recognised. Any participant who felt like to substantiate the response was allowed to do so.

There were some probing questions from the researcher to the respondents that followed after the question asked to ensure that more information was collected on the topic under discussion. The information gathered was recorded and later transcribed. Some information collected was taken down in short notes form that was later referred to when doing data analysis.

3.5.1.3 Document Analysis

This method was used to validate data received from participants (Maree, 2007). The study of 'official documents' was one of the primary means of investigating the influence of school-culture on performance in high and low performing schools in Malawi. The term 'official documents' in this study refer to policy documents such "Code of Conduct for Schools" and "the Malawi National Examinations' Board National Examination results for schools".

Apart from official documents, 'documentary sources' were also studied to investigate the nature of school-culture for the schools involved in this study. The term 'documentary sources' in this study refers to both official and other relevant written materials obtained from the schools, such as school time-tables, learners attendance registers and teachers lesson or class attendance registers. This was done to establish what is on the ground that may impact on students' performance. (See the timetables appendices 8 and 9).

3.5.2 Data Collection Instruments

The following instruments were used to collect data in the study: interviews and lesson observation tool (see the appendices 1,2,3,4, and 5) and documents analysis.

3.5.2.1 Classroom Observation Tool

The other source of data for the study was classroom observation. It was envisaged that implementation of curriculum would be observed in each sampled school in any subject. The observational data were collected through inspection of the physical environment like method of

instruction, seating plan, gender sensitivity, security of students, teaching and learning materials furniture available, notices, clothing and time regulation among others, all sent message to the researcher. Eight lessons were observed, one from each sampled school. During observation, data was collected using two methods; thus, voice recording using digital recorder, written form by the researcher from respondents' feedback to the interview guide and completion of lesson observation form to capture teaching practices by the teachers. The teachers were requested for their permission to record their classroom interactions. This was done to check on classroom environment and teaching methodologies used.

There was development of a lesson observation tool in the areas to assess on how they affect teaching and learning. The researcher checked on: classroom physical environment, teaching methodologies used, content mastery by subject teacher, schemes and records of work, lesson plans, teacher punctuality, class transition and gender responsiveness (See appendix 5).

3.5.2.2 Interview Guide

The questions were put across the sampled prefects and any one was free to respond provided had an idea about the question(s). The respondents were requested to raise up their hand if they had an idea about the question posed. There were more probing questions if the response provided sounded too general or ambiguous. The data collected during Focus group discussion was recorded using a voice recorder that was digitalized then later transcribed and some kept as loose noted to be referred to later during data analysis.

3.5.2.3 Document Analysis

There was a systematic evaluation of documents from CWED at school level regarding how national examinations were analysed. These documents assisted in identification of high and low performing schools. The documents concerning school rules and regulations were also analysed

to compare how school rules and regulations are done in the schools. The document with teachers' code of conduct was also analysed to check teachers' behaviours in the schools. The termly school results in the schools were also analysed.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is all about making sense of the collected information so that you can understand the major issues that come out of your data. According to Creswell and Plano (2007) data analysis is the systematic way of organising information in order to make sense out of it. The data analysis helps to understand your findings. Deriving sense of data involves arrangement of information in an orderly manner so that patterns can easily be deduced and interpretations made.

In this study, content thematic analysis was deployed. Data were analysed according to themes and descriptions which corresponded to the research questions. Data coding was also done to assist in the analysis. Then categories and themes were generated through inductive thematic analysis and the cross-case analysis. Since the study was a multiple case study, as Merriam (2002) suggests, there were two stages of analysis thus within-case analysis and the across-case analysis. For the within-case analysis, each case was treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself. Upon completion of the analysis of each case, a cross-case analysis was done.

The themes were generated from research questions responding to whether schools operate in the same environment, factors that contribute to high and low performance in secondary schools, how the emerging factors contribute to performance in secondary schools and how to improve bad school-culture factors to improve performance.

3.7 Data Management

Data gathered from various sources were kept in the form of field notes, some data was stored as soft copy in flash disks and hard disks in the hard drives and transcripts. The notes were made from analysis of official documents used and documentary sources to be used in the study.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Since the researcher invaded respondents' privacy, the researcher could not subject respondents to situations harmful or uncomfortable, unless they agreed to it. The participation in the research was voluntary and respondents had the right to refuse or not divulge certain information about them. Letters seeking authority to do research at the designated schools were sought from Mzuzu University ethical committee after enrolment into the study after adequately presenting to them the scope, purpose of the study including assurance that there was no serious risk to be involved by them participating in the study. The letter was sought from Ministry of Education Science and Technology through the Education Division Manager of Central West Education Division. The only risk which could occur was breach of privacy and confidentiality in case data collected were lost or got into the hands of people other than the researcher. Participants were assured that privacy and confidentiality would be maintained through use of pseudonyms on the data collection forms to ensure anonymity of respondents.

3.9 Trustworthiness of the Study

This is the verification that the information presented in the report is accurate and true (Creswell, 2003). Gall (1996) postulates that a study's trustworthiness is increased when data analysis and conclusions are triangulated, and the subjects' perceptions are verified systematically. This study achieved trustworthiness and credibility in either of the following ways:

a) There were voice recording in the course of data collection using digital recorder. This is supported by Kawawa (2004) who asserts that direct quotations were used to retain the voice of respondents. Besides that, instruments for data collection were refined by the supervisor before piloting them.

b) Triangulation: this refers to use of various data collection methods, sources and analyses to establish validity and reliability of findings. This study used interview guides, documentary analyses, and member check to cross-check irregularities and inconsistencies within the data as used. According to Mertens (2005) member check is the most important criterion in establishing credibility. The interview notes were later transcribed and submitted to the respondents to verify if all the information produced really reflected the interview conducted. The recordings were played several times to capture exactly what the respondents said. The researcher was friendly and accommodative to the respondents. This is echoed by Mgomezulu (2007) who narrates that the researcher ought to be neat and of pleasant character to control the effects of personal reactivity.

c) Pilot study of instruments: According to De Vos (2001) study instruments check whether the findings obtained will be the same when different people use the same measures of data collection in a similar context. This was done to modify the instruments so they collect correct information intended to be collected. In the study, case studies were used. The case studies are a multi-perspective analyses which means that the researchers consider not just voices and perspectives of individual actors, but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interactions among and between them hence focus group discussions were involved. This enables findings to bring trustworthiness to the research.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) limitations are some aspects of the study that the researcher knows may negatively impact on the research that he /she has no control over. The following are the limitations to this study: some respondents did not submit semi-structured interview papers that they were served with in the event the researcher faced time factor. Some participants did not divulge enough information that could have added more value to this research as some information looked sensitive and personal as they feared being victimised.

3.11 Delimitations

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) delimitation is setting boundaries of the study to make it manageable. This study was supposed to be done across the country but was limited to Central West Education Division due to financial constraints. School-culture in the study was limited to perspectives of school managers only on the parameters of: institutional environment, interpersonal relationships/collegial support, curriculum implementation/teacher quality, leadership and student quality. The study was limited to eight (8) Head-teachers, sixteen (16) heads of departments in each sampled school, forty (40) prefects and eight (8) parents in the PTA executive.

3.12 Chapter Summary

The chapter has highlighted the aim of the study, defined research methodology and explained main aim of methodology. It has also indicated that interpretivist paradigm was used as correlates with qualitative research approach. The chapter has also stated the research site for the study, population involved, sample of the population, sampling techniques, data collection tools

and management of the data. It has also stated the ethical considerations for the study, its trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings and discusses them in relation to the literature review. This chapter is divided into sections as follows: first section gives descriptions of research sites; second section gives description of participants and the third section presents findings of the research on the influence of school-culture on students' learning in high and low performing schools in CWED. The study intended to get responses to the following sub-research questions: (1) Do schools operate in the same environment? (2) What are some of the school-culture factors that contribute to high or low performance in schools? (3) How do the school-culture factors contribute to high or low performance in schools? (4) How can school-culture factors be improved to mitigate low performance in schools?

The chapter also includes additional discussions on the implications for educational practice, recommendations, suggestion for further research and limitations of the study. This chapter, therefore, presents the findings of the study.

4.2 Schools Operating Environment

The findings were in terms of description of schools, management, school environment, resources availability and general characteristics of high and low performing schools.

Description of Schools Sampled for this Study

The schools understudy, were from Lilongwe urban and Lilongwe rural west. The schools sampled are described in terms of environment, resources and management.

4.2.1 School A

The Environment:

The school is for single sex education and caters for boys only. It has a capacity of 360 students and in each form, there are 90 students. The school is brick fenced and has employed 5 watch men to beef up security in the school.

The school is a grant aided boarding national secondary school. It is located in Lilongwe Rural West in the boundary of Lilongwe urban.

The Resources:

The school has adequate number of teachers in all the subjects offered at the school. It has adequate infrastructure ranging from class rooms, laboratories meant for Computer, Chemistry, Agriculture, Biology and Physics. Most of the teachers are accommodated within the school and very few renting outside the school premises. The school is deemed to have effective teachers. The school has 30 teachers with pupil teacher ratio of 1:12.

The Management:

The school developed a service charter to guide its operations. The charter comprises vision statement, mission statement, motto and core values that guide the school. It has vigilant PTA with effective executive. The parents assist the school in a number of activities targeting teaching and learning leading to better outcome of students. The students in the school are autonomous and disciplined (see appendix 11).

4.2.2 School B

The Environment:

The school is for single sex education and caters for girls only. It has a capacity of 680 students and in each form, there are one hundred and seventy (170) students. The school is brick fenced and has employed 8 watch- men and one (1) policeman housed within the school premises to beef up security in the school. The school is a government fully funded boarding national secondary school. It is located in Lilongwe urban.

The Resources:

The school has an adequate number of teachers in all the subjects. It has adequate infrastructure ranging from classrooms, laboratories meant for Computer, Chemistry, Agriculture, Biology, Home Economics, Physics and a resource centre. It has twelve (12) teachers accommodated within the school and thirty-eight (38) renting outside the school premises. The school has fifty (50) teachers, with a pupil-teacher ratio of 1:14. The teachers are deemed effective.

The Management:

The school developed a service charter to guide school operations. The charter comprises a school's vision statement, mission statement, motto and core values guiding the school. It has vigilant PTA with effective executive. The parents assist the school in a number of activities targeting teaching and learning leading to better outcome of students. The students in the school are autonomous and disciplined.

4.2.3 School C

The Environment

The school is for single sex education and caters for boys only. The school has a capacity of three hundred and twenty (320) students and in each form, there are (eighty) 80 students. The school is brick fenced and has employed 6 watchmen to beef up security in the school. The school is a private boarding secondary school. It is located in Lilongwe urban.

The Resources:

The school has reasonable number of teachers and well qualified. The school has adequate infrastructure ranging from classrooms, laboratories meant for Computer, Chemistry, Agriculture, Biology and Physics. It has twelve (12) teachers, all accommodated within the school. The school has pupil teacher ratio of 1:27. The teachers are deemed effective.

The Management:

The school developed a service charter to guide school operations. The charter comprises a school's vision statement, mission statement, motto and core values guiding the school. The school has vigilant PTA with effective executive. The parents assist the school in a number of activities targeting teaching and learning leading to better outcome of students. The students in the school are autonomous and disciplined.

4.2.4 School D

The Environment:

The school is a co-education. It has a capacity of four hundred (400) students and in each form, there are one hundred (100) students. It is not fenced and has employed six (6) watchmen to beef

up security in the school. The school is a Community Day boarding Secondary School. It is located in Lilongwe Rural West and about sixty (60) km from Lilongwe urban.

The Resources:

The school has adequate number of teachers however, with few numbers of science teachers. It has however adequate infrastructure ranging from classrooms, laboratories meant for Computer, Chemistry, Agriculture, Biology and Physics. It has eighteen (18) teachers, all accommodated within the school. The school has pupil teacher ratio of 1:22. The teachers are deemed effective.

The Management:

The school developed a service charter to guide school operations. The charter comprises a school's vision statement, mission statement, motto and core values guiding the school. The school has vigilant PTA with effective executive. The parents assist the school in a number of activities targeting teaching and learning leading to better outcome of students. The students in the school are autonomous and disciplined.

4.2.5 School E
The Environment:

The school is a co-education. It has the capacity of three hundred and sixty (360) students and in each form, there are ninety (90) students. It is brick fenced and has employed four (4) watchmen to beef up security in the school. It is a grant aided Day Secondary School and is located in Lilongwe urban.

The Resources:

It has adequate infrastructure ranging from classrooms, laboratories meant for Computer, Chemistry, Agriculture, Biology, Physics and Wood Work workshop. It is only the Head-teacher and the deputy Head-teacher who are accommodated within the school premises and the rest are commuting. The school is deemed to have few effective teachers as others reside very far from the school. The school has thirty-one (31) teachers, with pupil teacher ratio of 1:12.

The Management:

The school's PTA is not very vigilant, save for very few members in the executive. The school has vision statement, mission statement, motto and core values but not applicable in the school. The parents assist the school in very limited areas of activities targeting teaching and learning leading to better outcome of students. The students in the school are much dependent on support rendered by the teachers. There are very few students who are able to accomplish academic tasks given by the teachers on their own. Most of the students are not punctual in school related activities and most of the learners fail to abide by school rules and regulations hence a lot of indiscipline cases have been registered in the school hence academic results not good.

4.2.6 School F

The Environment:

The school is meant for co- education. It has a capacity of four hundred and eighty (480) students and in each form, there are one hundred and twenty (120) students. The school is not fenced with two (2) watchmen. It is a Community Day Secondary School. It is located in Lilongwe urban. The students in the school are heavily dependent on spoon feeding for better results.

The Resources:

The school has an adequate number of teachers and however understaffed in science department. It has also inadequate infrastructure as it has no laboratories meant for Computer, Chemistry, Agriculture, Biology, Home Economics, Physics and even no library. It has nineteen (19) teachers, all of which are accommodated outside the school premises. The school has a pupil-teacher ratio of 1:15. The teachers are deemed not punctual on school related activities as they reside far from the school hence not effective. The school operates with inadequate teaching and learning materials.

The Management:

The school has no service charter to guide school operations. The head teacher, teachers and students were unable to spell out the school's vision statement, mission statement, motto and core values of the school. The school has almost non-existent PTA as there is no impact on school related activities.

4.2.7 School G

The Environment:

The school is co-education. It has a capacity of three hundred and twenty (320) students and in each form, there are eighty (80) students. The school is brick fenced and has employed two (2) watch men to beef up security in the school. The school is a private secondary school catering for day scholars and borders. It is located in Lilongwe Rural West. The students in the school are not self-reliant as mostly depend on teachers to instruct them what to do.

The Resources:

The school has inadequate number of teachers coupled with inadequate infrastructure like classrooms and laboratories meant for Computer, Chemistry, Agriculture, Biology, Physics and Library are non-existent. It has ten (10) teachers with an enrolment of six hundred (600) students and all the teachers are accommodated outside the school premises. The school has a pupil-teacher ratio of 1:60. The teachers are ineffective as they fail to manage time properly for their daily routines in the school and teachers have no time to rest due to huge workloads.

The Management:

The school has a passive service charter to guide school operations. The school intends to adopt the board of governor system of running the school. However, currently operates under full control of the school Director.

4.2.8 School H

The Environment:

The school is a co-education. It has a capacity of six hundred (600) students and in each form, there are one hundred and fifty (150) students. The school is not brick fenced and has employed 3 watch men to beef up security in the school. The school is a Community Day Secondary School. It is located in Lilongwe Rural West and about twenty (20) km from Lilongwe urban. The school is under pilot with Improving Secondary Education in Malawi (ISEM).

The Resources:

It has an adequate number of teachers but very few in science department. It has an adequate infrastructure ranging from classrooms, laboratories meant for Computer, Chemistry, Agriculture, Biology, Physics and well-furnished Library (see appendix 10). Furthermore, it has

twenty-three (23) teachers, only eight (8) of them are accommodated within the school premises. The school has a pupil-teacher ratio of 1:26. The teachers are deemed not very effective because time management is an issue as they reside very far from the school. The habitable residential houses for the teachers are to some extent more than five (5) kilometres with poor road networks where minibuses and taxis are inaccessible.

The Management:

The school developed a service charter to guide school operations. The charter comprises a school's vision statement, mission statement, motto and core values guiding the school. The school has adopted prefecture council and students' council, Board of Governors and PTA. Regardless of this adoption, Board of Governors is not ticking as some members in both PTA and Board of Governors do not discharge their duties as they seem busy people to attend to school matters. Regardless of ineffective PTA and Board of Governors, students are disciplined though travel long distance to school. There is an effort in the school to ensure that boarding facilities are in place so that students especially girls do not travel long distances to school.

The key findings in the study have been that schools do not operate in the same environment. The high performing schools have an edge over low performing schools in terms of environment, resources, and management in the schools. The high performing schools are well located within conducive environment for teaching and learning and well protected as they are fenced. The low performing schools are in other cases located near drinking joints and maize mills where noise pollution is the order of the day. The high performing schools seem to have adequate teaching and learning materials unlike low performing schools. The low performing school struggle in acquisition of teaching and learning resources. The management in high performing schools tend to adopt instructional and democratic leadership styles whereas in low performing schools they

seem to advocate laissez faire and autocratic leadership styles. The high performing schools have vigilant PTA executive committee as opposed to low performing schools where in other cases look in-existent. The enrolment in high performing schools display low pupil-teacher ratio unlike in low performing schools.

4.3 General Characteristics of High Performing Schools

They are headed by qualified and experienced head teachers. The students in the schools are well disciplined and are able to do academic work with very minimal support from the teachers. The schools have adequate resources like teaching and learning materials, furniture, teachers, infrastructure to support teaching and learning in the schools. There is also good sanitation in the schools including water closet latrines for the students. The libraries are well stocked with books and students are granted opportunity to study and borrow books from them. They are given schedules for studies and time limit to keep the book borrowed before they go to exchange for another one. If the period expires before they give back the book, they are charged a fee as such they use them wisely during the duration borrowed.

The schools also have well stocked Laboratories where they do practical lessons in science subjects. The classroom conditions are conducive as they have enough furniture for students to sit on with comfort. The students are also forced to put on school uniform almost throughout the learning days to ensure that there is no disparity between the rich and the poor. This eases integration of the learners from the poor and rich families as no traces of dressing disparities can be seen. These schools have adequate teacher houses within the school premises. In other cases, the Head-teachers' offices are well furnished and well ventilated. The prefects from these schools are fluent English speakers and are able to analyse administrative issues being either

democratic or authoritative. The learners also prefer a certain degree of autonomy to discover some of the learning points on their own.

The schools are well secured from disturbances as are brick fenced except one and very strict on who to visit the school premises. The schools are highly isolated from busy places like taverns and busy roads. The norms that promote teaching and learning are adhered to by the learners, teachers, administration and other stakeholders like parents. The study has found that at school B there are strict at enforcement of school rules and regulations. The Head-teacher at school D had this to say regardless of the school not fenced. He had this to say regarding out of bounds in the school,

> *We have an invisible fence here to the visitors but we the owners of land are able to visualise it. None of our students can cross. I know most of the visitors tend to wonder why they never see students in that zone after our imaginary boundary.*

The above remarks from the Head-teacher at school B indicate that the school is very strong on enforcement of school rules and regulations. The schools have developed a reading culture among the learners and an advocacy of English speaking among teachers and learners. The placards could be seen portraying message no go zone with your vernacular language.

4.4 General Characteristics of Low Performing Schools

These schools also exist in the Central West Education Division. In rare cases headed by qualified and experienced Head-teachers. They have poor economic base as they lack adequate structures that support teaching and learning. For instance, no Laboratories, no teacher houses except in minor cases Head-teacher's and deputy Head-teacher's houses. These schools experience poorly stocked Libraries and sometimes possessing a lot of books that are neither in the academic curriculum. The furniture in the schools is inadequate such that some students sit

literary on the floor. As a mitigation measure, some efforts are being made to ensure that benches are made for the students to sit on when learning.

The learners of the schools prefer spoon feeding type of learning so that everything they would want to learn must be prepared by the teachers. The Head-teachers' offices and houses if available are not in a good condition as the floors have developed some cracks and the roofs almost being blown by wind as this is evidenced when the wind blows.

The learners in general, cannot express themselves in English and in most cases resort to vernacular speaking even writing on the tests at the end of term and this gives a benefit of the doubt of using vernacular language even on national examinations. The study found that students in low performing schools have lower intelligence quotient as there is much to be done to improve performance in the school.

This is evidenced from remarks from the Head-teacher at the school H who had this to lament:

> *We don't know where teaching should start from, should we start teaching handwriting and word building now? Should we go back to our Dictation days? Learners of this school require too much of spoon feeding.*

The remarks from the Head-teacher are indicating that quality of students in school H has left a lot to be desired. This leads to poor performance in the school.

4.5 Characteristics of Head-Teachers Who Participated in the Study

All the Head-teachers of the sampled schools were involved in the study thus eight (8) in total. In terms of gender, the distributions were two (2) females and six (6) males. All the Head-teachers are experienced and minimum holders of Bachelor's degree except one from Private secondary school who has a diploma but with experience of six (6) years. The highest qualification for headship among the sampled schools has been Masters in Education.

4.6 Characteristics of Heads of Departments Involved in the Study

The study involved heads of departments of science and language or humanities. All the heads had a reasonable work experience on their positions with a minimum of two (2) years' experience and maximum of fourteen (14) years' experience at the position. All the heads of departments are holders of Bachelor's degree in education except two (2) from a private secondary school who hold diploma in Theology and two (2) with a Master's degree. The findings found the following results:

Table 4.1: Work experience of Head-Teacher (Hts) and Head of Departments (HoDs) in the sampled schools

Experience in years	Number of Hts	Number of HoDs
1-3 years	3	5
4-6years	2	7
7-9 years	1	2
10 and above years	2	2
Total	8	16

The table shows that there are three Head-teachers and five (5) heads of departments with experience range of one (1) to three (3) years, two Head-teachers (2) and seven heads of departments of experience range of four (4) to six (6) years, there is one (1) Head-teacher and two heads of departments of experience range of seven (7) to nine (9) years and two Head-teachers and two heads of departments of experience above ten (10) years.

Table 4.2: Qualifications of Head-Teachers (Hts) and Head of Departments (HoDs).

Qualification	Number of Hts	Number of HoDs
Master in Education	1	2
Degree in Education	5	10
Diploma in Education	1	2
General Degree	0	0
General Diploma	1	2
Total	8	16

The table shows that one (1) out of eight (8) Head-teachers and two (2) out of sixteen (16) heads of departments hold a master's degree in education, five (5) out of eight (8) Head-teachers and ten (10) out of sixteen (16) heads of departments hold degree in education and none hold a general degree in education. There is also one Head-teacher (1) out of eight (8) and two (2) out of sixteen (16) Head of Departments who hold a general diploma.

4.7 Characteristics of Prefects Who Participated in the Study

The prefects involved in the study included the head boys and head girls of the schools. These are regarded as overseers in all prefecture body. They check that teaching and learning take place in the school besides other activities in the school. The librarian is another portfolio in the prefecture body that was involved in the study. This forms the core business of teaching and learning in the school. They assist in distribution of books in the library to teachers and fellow students. They contribute positively to academic performance. According to Chapman and Lynden (2000), education and Library are two inseparable indivisible concepts, both being fundamentally and synchronically related to and co-existent with each other. Organising a library

to aid education, calls for an atmosphere of friendliness and useful collection. The education facilitators should involve librarians in planning education programmes and learners should be given instruction.

The other portfolios involved were the entertainment and sports. These have double standards impact on students' learning depending on the degree of involvement. The entertainment refreshes the students' brain so that students can learn better after being exhausted in their studies and so is sports. It may also deter performance if frequently used. According to (Resnick, 2006), today's technology can open new opportunities for children to playfully explore, experiment, design, and event.

The other portfolio involved was the dining prefect. This portfolio checks on the diet in the school. The diet has a bearing on students' learning as students with poor diet are prone to poor health hence poor school attendance and also diet has an impact on intelligence quotient of the learners. This concurs with Erickson (2006) who postulates that substances found in all the food are important for brain development and function.

The other portfolio involved was time-keeper. The time-keeper manages time in the school. The prefect makes sure that punctuality prevails in the school. This ensures that all school related activities are done on time. Then also involved were the health prefects. These looked after the health of all the learners as good health breeds better education. This is in support by Chansaengsee (2017) who indicates that we can prevent disappointment in life by practicing time management.

4.8 School Factors Affecting Learners' Performance in the Sampled Schools

The study investigated school factors affecting and enhancing learners' performance in high and low performing schools. The findings of high performing schools are presented in sharp contrast to low performing schools.

4.8.1 Curriculum Implementation Practices

The data gathered in high performing schools indicated that availability of teaching and learning materials is crucial in achievement of high performance in schools. All the high performing schools indicated that they had adequate teaching and learning resources in their schools. The resources included qualified teachers, books, laboratories, furniture, chalk, dusters, chemicals for practical subjects, flip charts and pental markers.

The study found that at school B the school had adequate teaching and learning resources that assist complement teaching and learning in the school. This is evidenced by remarks from the Head-teacher at school B who had this to say:

> *Our school has adequate teaching and learning resources and the teachers are very resourceful on provision of locally available resources (TALULAR) to enhance understanding in learners hence high performance. If I can grant you a chance to have a glance at the walls in each and every classroom, you will see the talking walls through print rich. Even during national examinations, we do not struggle with chemicals. They are adequately stocked in our laboratories. All this has helped our school perform highly.*

The head of department at school C also echoed this that they had adequate teaching and learning resources. He had this to say:

> *At our school we just hear teachers from other schools complaining about shortage of books but here it is not an issue.*

The remarks from the Head-teacher and head of department at school B and C respectively indicate that adequate teaching and learning resources improve performance in schools B and C. In sharp contrast, low performing schools indicated that there are insufficient teaching and learning resources in the schools. In the four schools involved in the study, it was found that each school had one qualified science teacher and the rest are just improvised. To other extreme cases, they hire science teachers from their nearby schools.

The school libraries are also poorly stocked and most of the books available are not prescribed in the academic curriculum. The study found that there was inadequacy of teaching and learning resources in the schools. This is evidenced through remarks from the Head-teacher of low performing school G. He remarked that,

> *It is a mountain to climb to perform well during national examinations at this school. We lack teaching and learning resources here. We struggle for science books.*

Similarly, the head of science department at school H lamented;

> *I am the only qualified science teacher in the school and I teach all the classes yet the school does not have science books exceeding 5 in each subject and yet each class has at least 80 learners. Is it possible to achieve good results here?*

These remarks from the Head-teacher at school G and head of department at school H are evidence enough that lack of teaching and learning resources affect students' performance negatively.

4.8.1.1 Dedication to Teaching and Learning

The study found that both teachers and learners in high performing schools exhibited strong commitment to academic work. The teachers in the schools are described effective. The teachers

try everything possible to attend to their scheduled lessons and prepare remedial lessons for slow learners.

The prefects during focus group discussion agreed that teachers are doing commendable work as they are punctual for their lessons and are too ready to assist them even during week-ends and holidays. This is line with what the Neo-classical theory advocates. It calls for worker motivation so that workers dedicate to duty and achieve maximum productivity.

 In the event one teacher is absent due to unforeseen circumstances, the other teacher covers him up or her up by teaching on his or her behalf, the Head-teacher at school D had this to report,

> *The class monitors are empowered to report any sign of laziness by the teachers.*
> *The matter becomes reported to the class teacher for immediate attention.*

The class teacher tries everything possible to resolve the matter with the concerned teacher and if it fails the matter is referred to heads of departments who later sanction the lazy teacher to the meeting. The teacher is reprimanded, counseled and enlightened on the consequences laziness in the teaching profession on the learners. In the event that the teacher does not make strides to improve, relevant authorities are requested to arrange for posting to another school. The study found that teachers and learners at school D are dedicated to teaching and learning.

The Head-teacher of the school remarked that,

> *The school-culture of hard working among teachers is paying dividends. Even if a*
> *lazy teacher is posted to the school, he or she suddenly changes to hard working.*
> *Thus, the beauty of the school. There is a spirit of exorcism of laziness in teachers*
> *here, he laughed.*

The above remarks from the Head-teacher at school D are evidence enough that dedication to teaching and learning improves performance in the school. This concurs with findings of Hopkins (2001), who reports that students learn well more when a teacher clearly explains and illustrates ideas, reviews regularly and holds students accountable for work, provides students

with enough opportunity to practice, gives prompt feedback to learners, corrects mistakes and allows students to use a skill until it is thoroughly learned and become automatic overtime.

The other underlining factors regarding dedication to duty include light teaching loads and introduction of incentives to best teacher basing on the results of students, the Head-teacher at school A reported. The prefects at school C also in unison agreed that they learn all the subjects scheduled for a particular day. The study had established that the spirit of team work and dedication to duty had permeated the school-culture. In several activities be it academic or extracurricular team work was noted in either teachers or students.

The study found that team work and dedication to duty prevail in the schools A and C. The prefects at school C had this to say,

> *...... at this school, we work as a unit. We don't segregate young, old, poor or rich. We always work together in short; we coexist and this does not exclude the teachers.*

The above remarks from Head-teacher at school A and prefects at school C are evidence enough that team work and dedication to duty improve performance in the schools A and D. This concurs with the Neo-classical theory which entails that for better results in an organisation, there is need for team work with equal effort.

To the contrary, the study found that in low performing school H students are lazy on school related activities. Whenever teachers call the learners for extra lessons, very few turn up and this demoralised the teachers. The Head-teacher of the school H had these remarks to share as a teacher,

> *……. as for me, I try to arrange make up and remedial lessons for the students but in most cases very few students turn up for the lessons. This reduces teaching morale.*

This is evidence enough that laziness in school H contributes negatively to students' performance.

4.8.1.2 Data Driven Decision Making

Regarding the teachers, it was observed that they prefer consultations before making crucial decisions that might have a bearing on the school. It was vividly seen during data collection how student's discipline case was handled. It was a process full of consultations and Head-teacher too had the final input leading to final decision.

The study found that the discipline committee in the school A was very procedural when handling indiscipline issues in the school. There were fully consultations in coming up with evidence in the case. The Head-teachers had this to report on the matter,

> *Discipline issues need to be handled with care, there is need to establish the truth of the matter through thorough investigations before you make a final decision.*

This is evidence enough that data driven decision making leads to correct decisions in the school, hence, improvement of school discipline and leading to high performance.

This concurs with Davenport, (2006), who informs that in recent years, more organisations are considering how to run smarter, more agile, and more efficient businesses by using the right data to support efficient and effective decision making.

4.8.1.3 Club-based Subjects

The study found that students in high performing schools valued club-based subjects. These subjects were discussed better during club periods where they shared knowledge regarding the

subjects. In the long run, good grades in particular subjects were achieved. At school B, the Head-teacher of the school had these remarks to say,

> *………. at this school, we have club-based subjects. We have Mathematics, Computer, History, Geography, French, Home Economics, and Agriculture clubs. In these clubs, students have days to meet. Students discuss problems and seek their solution. The outcome of this has been good performance in the subjects and you may inquire from the Examination Officers about performance in these subjects.*

The remarks from the Head-teacher at school B are enough evidence that club-based subjects improve performance in school B.

The findings concur with Pervisic (1987) who postulates that clubs are a fertile ground for the development of creative work as they are subject to minimum authoritarian requirements of the curricula or textbooks and the work in clubs provides for a more intimate and friendly relationship between the coordinators and the students. The students feel free and are more active in the organisation and implementation of club activities, and they also learn without fear of mistakes or grading.

4.8.1.4 Qualification and Experience of Teachers

The schools that were high performers had adequate staffing as compared to low performing schools. Each teacher in high performing schools was mostly assigned a single subject in a particular class. This enabled thorough preparation of the teachers in their teaching subject areas leading to content mastery. The student-teacher ratio was also ideal for teachers to attend to all students and make sure that students were in the same boat. The study found that at high performing school C there were adequate numbers of qualified teachers. The teachers too had

ample time to cover ground work of the teaching syllabi. This was evidenced by the remarks made by the Head-teacher of the school. He had this to say,

> *We have adequate staff in the school. Each teacher teaches a subject of specialization and so far, no complaint has come from students about incompetence of any teacher. All the teachers plan their lessons well and are able to respond to students' questions competently. At this school, we do not play with students' future as we know that their future lies in our hands so teachers teach.*

The remarks made by the Head-teacher at school C were evidence enough that adequate number of qualified teachers improves performance in the school.

It was a different story with low performing schools. The study found that there was inadequate staffing resulting into too much workloads of their teachers. The teachers looked had no time to prepare for lessons as they looked tired when knocking off. This was evidenced by the remarks made by the Head-teacher of school F who had this to say,

> *Working at this school is "Thangata" (meaning hard work) as of Mondays, I work tirelessly nine periods non-stop and I always sleep when I get home and wake up at 10:00 pm for my supper. I really get exhausted with work and I do not find room to prepare for my lessons.*

The above remarks from the Head-teacher of school F clearly indicated that inadequacy of teachers leads to poor preparation of teachers as teachers over work and have no time to prepare for forthcoming lesson. This then renders poor performance in the school.

The findings however, are in sharp contrast with the findings of Adeyemi (2010); and Yala and Wanjohi (2011). In their findings that teachers' experience and professional qualifications were the prime predictors of students' achievement, their study found that teachers' educational level and teaching experience were not statistically significant in explaining student achievement. The

findings therefore suggest that obtaining more than minimum qualification does not add value to performance of the teacher in discharging his or her duties at secondary school level.

This is then echoed by Rivkins (2005) who concluded that there was no evidence that master's degree raises teachers' effectiveness at secondary school level. Furthermore, this assertion is evident in schools where performance is poor yet they have experienced and qualified Head-teachers and teachers. The findings of Hoy and Miskel (1987) reveal that teacher qualification without commitment, school without healthy school-culture, students' existence at schools without motivation for learning is artificial.

4.8.1.5 Effectiveness of Teaching Methodologies

In high performing schools it was noted that most teachers resorted to use of variety of teaching methods and most commonly used methods being student-centred. Teachers prepared their work thoroughly and during delivery period, they just gave eye openers to the students on the subject matter and the rest of the work was being done by students. This had been proved beneficial to the students following the Chinese adage, Mtunda and Safuli (1986) *"I learn I forget and I do I remember."* This had inculcated a reading culture in students and they were always busy searching for information they were given in classes. The students also felt comfortable when expressing themselves whenever they were to present something during plenaries or group discussions. There had also been a great improvement in communication skills among the students as the Head-teacher at school A reported. High performing schools were devoted to use of a variety of teaching methods, the low performing schools were inclined to lecture and drilling methods. Upon inquiry for use of such methods, at school F the study found that drilling method was emphasised.

The Head-teacher of school F had these remarks on teaching methodologies,

Our learners are too slow in grasping concepts but we are all subjected to the same syllabi for them to sit for examinations. Do you think we can manage to cover what is stipulated in the syllabi? At our school, we rely on individual brilliance though very few have this element. We arrange special time for such students so that they are helped but otherwise it's a mountain to climb. Our students fail to construct good English sentences even in form 4 and you can imagine that. If we intend to adopt student-centred approach teaching methods, then most of our teaching work would remain untaught.

The remarks from the Head-teacher from school F were evidence enough that teaching methodologies impact on students' learning and these methods must be used appropriately; otherwise, they dwindle performance in schools if not correctly used.

This concurs with the findings of Sudjana (2010) who postulates that education world has known various methods of learning without a learning method, learning will not be effective and therefore in order that the learning process goes well, we need effective learning methods.

4.8.1.6 Gender Sensitiveness and Responsiveness

The study found that in co-education schools where students performed highly, teachers were gender responsive when teaching. Both girls and boys were equally attended to when it came to teaching and learning. Both sexes were given equal opportunities to respond to questions and also ask questions where they did not understand.

The Head-teacher of school D had these remarks to share on gender responsiveness:

Girls can perform equally to boys therefore equal chance for learning must be given.

The above remark from Head-teacher at school D showed gender responsiveness improves performance in school D. This concurs with UN Women (2015, p5) which indicates that gender responsive evaluation is a process that is inclusive, participatory and respectful of all stakeholders by ensuring that women's voices including different groupings, are prevalent throughout the evaluation.

In contrast, for students in low performing schools, the study found that concentration was on individual brilliance which translated to a focus not on gender but on who had the abilities to do well. The Head-teacher of school F had these remarks to share on gender responsiveness,

> *Quality of students is at stake at the school we tend to help those who have the abilities and neglect others so that we get at least some with better aggregate points.*

The remarks above from the Head-teacher from school F shows that gender responsiveness is not considered in the school hence negatively affect performance.

4.8.2 Enforcement of School Rules and Regulations

The study established that highly performing schools had enforcement of school rules and regulations. There were vigilant form teachers and class monitors in each class responsible for the enforcement of school rules and regulations at class level. This trend of class treatment has culminated into total adoption and adherence to school rules and regulations.

One of the prefects in the focus group discussion at school D had this to say in response to the question on teasing and bullying,

> *……. there is always order and discipline in the school. Any student in the school is at liberty to associate with anyone regardless of class level and there is no teasing or bullying in the school, I can assure you.*

The sentiments expressed by the prefect at school D were echoed by one Head-teacher at school A who had this to say:

> *We have clearly stipulated rules and regulations that are posted in various notice boards in the school stating the charge of any offence committed.*

The above sentiments portray that in the schools A and D there is order and discipline due to enforcement of rules and regulations and this improves performance in the school. This concurs with McGregory (2006) who narrates that students' discipline is a prerequisite to almost everything a school has to offer students.

Teachers also played a significant role on students in compliance to school rules and regulations. They act as watchdogs to students who violate school rules and regulations and this happened whether the teacher was on duty or not. It was also on record that all teachers had ever reported to the discipline committee at least a student who broke one of the rules and regulations.

One Head of Department was asked to shed more light on the significance of order and discipline in the school. All he hinged on was mainly enhancement of learners' performance. The study has also established that a school without order and discipline results in teachers disjointed effort in the school, and the teachers and students not pulling their efforts in the same direction as they work in disarray. In such environments; teachers, students and support staffs never dedicate themselves to duty hence poor performance in schools.

In addition to all this, one prefect at school D during Focus Group Discussion had this to say:

> *Most of the times if we go to the staffroom, we see our teachers busy working either marking students' work, preparing lesson plans or discussing how best to approach a topic to enhance understanding among students.*

This was echoed by all prefects in support.

However, the study found that at school F enforcement of school rules and regulations was a challenge. The Head-teacher of the school had this to report,

> *School rules and regulations are really available but compliance by the students has been a challenge. On a weekly basis, we have cases concerning students violating them. The most common indiscipline in the school has been students found out of bounds and reporting late for classes. The school has poor security as is not fenced hence unable to track late comers as there are various points through which students access entry to the school. The students sneak in the classroom or wait until break time to join their friends. This retards students' performance.*

From the sentiments expressed by the Head-teacher at school F, it was viewed that schools that enforce school rules and regulations there was discipline and school performance improve unlike otherwise.

4.8.3 Quality of students or nature of students

The study also sought to investigate the influence of intelligence quotient on learning. The study found that the students in the schools A, B, C, and D exhibited higher intelligence quotient as compared to the schools E, F, G and H. The study also found that students in schools A, B, C, and D preferred to work under certain degree of autonomy with very minimum supervision. This was noted after assessing some practices like how they conduct study circles on their own in the school to improve performance.

The study found that most students in schools A, B, C, and D were able to conduct study circles comfortably (see appendix (11) and one prefect from school A had this to say:

> *Study circles provide a good forum where we practice leadership skills, discover solutions to problems by ourselves, critical thinking and share knowledge to boost our performance.*

The remarks made by the prefect at school A above meant that students are very comfortable with study circles and are able to guide each other well contributing to good performance in the school. See appendix 11 for the study circles.

The study found a sharp contrast with the sentiments put forward by one prefect from school E who had this to say:

In most cases study circles are guided by ourselves, we give roles to each other but we lose track, get confused and leave the work uncompleted until the teacher comes to our rescue. In most cases we fail to understand the tasks the teachers assign us to do. The remarks from prefects in schools A and E were evidence enough that learners from these schools were of different abilities hence expectation of contrast performance. This concurs with Amsalu (2018), who indicates that the performance of educational institutions could be determined by the nature of school-culture including quality of administration, commitment of teachers and students' motivation for their learning. Specifically, Maslowski (2001), indicates that the effect of educational variables like teacher and student behaviour including school-culture, in general, have due value to students' academic achievement.

4.8.3.1 Punctuality

The study found that punctuality was among the core values in the successful schools. The teachers and students were noted punctual for both academic and extracurricular activities. It was also noted that if either a bell rang or siren wailed signaled the start and end of an activity both teachers and students were instantly viewed rushing for another activity. This was not evident in low performing schools. The students were seen reporting late for classes and some being punished while others were in class. All the activities were scheduled on the time table. See appendices 3 and 4 for timetables for high and low performing schools.

4.8.3.2 Prayer

The study has established that in successful schools, prayer formed one of the core values in the schools. It was discovered that some activities like meals, lessons and assemblies preparatory for studies were guided by a prayer. It was also noted that religious activities in the highly performing schools were much intensified. The schools were noted to register a good number of religious clubs like Student Christian Organisation in Malawi (SCOM), Youth Catholic Society (YCS), CCAPSO and Muslim Association clubs. There was a probe during Focus Group Discussion with the prefects at school B on the significance of prayers in the school, one prefect had this to say:

> *Prayer is very important. It instils discipline in the school. We all know that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The moment we adopt this, we don't expect violence in the schools. In addition to that, teachers prefer disciplined students. In this way, teachers easily assist the students in their problems.*

Another prefect at school A had this to say,

> *Prayer gives us confidence in all we do as we all know that nothing is impossible with God.*

The remarks above made by the prefects of schools A and B were evidence enough that prayer enforces discipline in the school hence improvement in performance.

4.8.3.3 English speaking campaign

The study found that in highly performing schools, student were proficient English speakers as opposed to lowly performing schools. The students in high performing schools were seen never speaking vernacular languages except during Chichewa period. This was in contrast to what was discovered in lowly performing school. The students were vividly seen asking an English

Literature question to a teacher in vernacular language. Upon interrogation with the Head-teacher at school E the school leader had this to say:

> *This is what we experience in this school. Students cannot construct English sentences orally and they resort to vernacular language instead.*

The remarks from the Head-teacher at school E give evidence that the students in the school struggle too much in English language hence very difficult to do well during national examinations. This brings poor results in the school.

In highly performing schools the study established that among the school norms, students are encouraged to speak in English as long as they reach the school yard and any student caught speaking vernacular was a culprit to be punished. The goal of this practice was to get students used to speaking English which is regarded as key subject to determine pass or failure of a student. It was also noted that at some strategic points were some posters signalling no vernacular zone meaning to say the zone is for English speaking only.

4.8.3.4 Discipline and orderliness

The study found that discipline and orderliness was order of the day in high performing schools. The students in high performing schools had the ability to create conducive learning environment even in the absence of a teacher they could study without making noise, conduct quiz on their own without any disturbance and punished whoever intended to disturb their learning environment. This was what was reported by one of the prefects at school B during Focus Group about what they do during their free time apart from teaching and learning in the school. She had this to say,

> *You will never hear noise in the school at any time during a learning day, even in the absence of a teacher. For instance, as soon as the siren wails for school*

activity, we go straight for the activity like assembly, prep or class. No-one pushes
us around. We study in a quiet environment without any disturbance.

These remarks from one prefect at school B were enough evidence that discipline and orderliness make students concentrate on school related activities and manage their time well. This practice improves performance in the school.

This is in sharp contrast with what was observed in low performing schools. It was noted that time management was a challenge as students were vividly seen reporting late for classes. There was also noise in the classes regardless of the presence of a teacher. It was clearly concluded that creation of conducive environment for learning is immaterial hence poor performance. This concurs with Paln and Bodunde (2010) who postulate that a teacher is supposed to mould or build a character especially of the young ones in his custody, but it is not exactly obtainable today.

4.8.4 Leadership styles and practices

The study had also looked into leadership practices done in these different categories of schools. The following parameters were used to gauge leadership practices: how the school administration motivated teachers and students, involved other stakeholders in decision making and school goal setting. The study found that highly performing schools demonstrated instructional leadership style while lowly performing schools exhibited autocratic mingled with Laissez-faire leadership styles.

According to Lezotte (2010) effective instructional leadership is generally recognised as the most important characteristic of school administrators. The effective instructional leaders are proactive and seek help in building team leadership and a culture conducive to learning and professional growth. The instructional leadership facilitates development, communication, implementation

and evaluation of a shared vision of learning that reflects excellence. The instructional leader targets his or her efforts towards improvement of students' outcomes. The instructional leader may conduct in-service training for teachers and expectations in line with best teaching practices to enhance students' performance. The instructional leader also offers continuous and timely feed-back and supports the teachers. The instructional leader monitors and evaluates teachers' performance through classroom observation and feedback is associated with better student performance.

In autocratic leadership style, the Head-teacher uses force in leading people. The Head-teacher does not allow teachers, learners and support staff to express their views on emerging issues in the school. All the subordinates have little or no say on how things are run in the school. Whereas in Laissez-faire type of leadership entails that subordinates are free to do what they like. In this case, subordinates lack leader's direction. The leader fails to command authority on subordinates.

The Laissez-faire leadership style is characterised by chaos or anarchy among peoples as activities are not guided by the leader. This was evidenced by the way teachers and students reported in the school. The teachers were free to report for duties on the exact time they had classes. There was also massive late coming in the school by the students. The observations by the researcher at school G indicate that the leadership style in the school G is Laisses faire as teachers and students could report for duties and school respectively anytime without being questioned and advised appropriately on how they need to behave. This way of doing things leads to poor performance in the school.

The data on the leadership styles of the head-teachers involved in the study is summarised in table below:

Table 4.3 Summary of Head-Teachers' leadership styles found in the sampled schools

	Leadership style	Number of HoDs	Number of prefects
1.	Democratic	1	6
2.	Laissez-faire	3	8
3.	Instructional	8	20
4.	Authoritarian	4	6
	Total	16	40

The findings from the table portray those eight (8) heads of departments noted their schools practise instructional leadership style. It was noted that these schools were also high performing and low performing schools recognised Democratic, Laissez-faire and Authoritarian types of leadership.

4.8.4.1 Motivation of teachers

The study found that there was a significant difference between the categories of schools under study. The schools that performed well exhibited different motivational strategies for the teachers. However, the most common and significant modality of motivation is through monetary rewards. The teachers were rewarded after the national examinations results were released. The teachers were rewarded according to grades obtained. At the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE), the grades that were rewarded were distinctions and strong credits. The grades commonly rewarded are 1,2,3 and 4. This was also reported that at Junior Certificate level (JC) grades A and B were the only grades that were rewarded. In this case, the teachers who produced the grades get awarded. The stronger the grade, the more the money is attached to. The Head-teacher of school A had this to say:

We normally go to the lake for these awards. For instance, last year, we splashed out about MK1,500,00.00 (One million five hundred thousand kwacha) on the awards ceremony.

The remarks above from the Head-teacher show that motivation in the school was a routine feature, and teachers got motivated. This motivation improves performance in the school.

The schools also motivated the teachers through delegation of duties and attendance of workshops. The teachers who performed well and looked cooperative were in most cases assigned duties like invigilation of national examinations and delegated to attend workshops that could sharpen their teaching and leadership styles.

The teachers who were appointed to be on duty for a given week were also given airtime for communication purposes. The teachers looked vigilant and committed to duty, hence, enforcing school discipline. All the teachers on duty perform according to expected standards. This is in sharp contrast with lowly performing schools. The Head-teachers of the schools were not hesitant to say we lack incentives to motivate our teachers. The school enrolment is very low and yet cost of living has skyrocketed. The school enrolment affected their revenue collection.

The study found that the Head-teachers of the schools arrange for school-based insets or at cluster level for the teachers to sharpen their teaching skills and gain new knew knowledge from their colleagues. The Head-teacher at school A had this to say on this,

At this school, we cannot close a term without organising an inset at either department level or cluster level. In these insets, teachers share knowledge and their experiences. This improves teaching and learning in the school, hence good results in the school.

The remarks above from the Head-teacher of school A shows an element of instructional leadership hence supporting teaching and learning in the school. This improves performance in the school.

4.8.4.2 Motivation of students

The study found that in highly performing schools, students were rewarded upon performing well during midterm tests, end of term tests and national examinations. All the students that appeared on top ten during midterm tests or end of term tests were rewarded with notebooks, calculators and mathematical instruments. The students who scoop the best positions get a lion's share of the awards.

The study found that the students who were chosen as prefects got a certificate of recognition after completion of their term of office. This happened during farewell ceremony with the form four students when about to sit for their national examinations. Prior to the farewell ceremony, all the prefects were taken to the lake for a hand-over ceremony to the form threes where they relax while the rest of the students are within the school campus.

The study found that in the schools where students were performing not to the expected standards, there was no motivation of any sort. The prefects are withdrawn from their duties within the school without any special ceremony but instead just communicated on assembly about hand-overs. The study also found that in most of these lowly performing schools, mid-term results are not released or worse still no administration of the tests in other schools and end of term results are not filtered to establish top ten students instead parents just come to collect school reports and everything ends there. The parents are not effective on academic follow-up of their children as some school reports remain uncollected.

The study further found that in high performing schools, students got rewards in areas of sports, cleanliness, quiz and behaviour when they do extremely well. The schools with boarding facilities also had inter-hostel competitions. The winning hostels were given money and parties were organised for them at hostel level. This made students get dedicated to such activities and performed much better than before.

This is in sharp contrast to what the study found in schools where students do not perform well. There are no competitions among students in different disciplines. There are insignificant strategies for motivating students. The most common is verbal appraisal to the learners and written comments to teachers. The findings concur with Anku, Amewugah and Glover (2018) individuals need incentives to perform their tasks in a well-organised manner.

4.8.5 Involvement of key stakeholders in decision making

The study found that in both school categories, there was involvement of stakeholders in decision making though extent the involvement differs in the degree. The high performing schools involve stakeholders more than in low performing schools. One Head-teacher at school D had this to say:

> *…….at this school, we work as a unit. The parents get recognition as well as they are party of decision making on development projects in the school. In short, we co-exist in the school.*

In line with that the Head-teacher at school C had this to say:

> *This is a school of the people for the people and by the people. We have a very active PTA who take part in decision making and the members are happy the way the school operates.*

These remarks from schools A and C were enough evidence that stakeholders were being involved in decision hence creation of sense of ownership to the stakeholders. This practice improves performance in the school.

All the schools that were investigated had prefecture with various responsibilities. The staff members were also assigned various responsibilities and these responsibilities were subject to change annually and upon establishment of incompetence on the responsibility by the member(s) be it student(s) or teacher(s). There is a prefecture body and staff responsibilities in high and low performing schools (see, appendices 6 and 7).

4.8.6 Promotion of security and safety

The findings from the study showed that the high performing schools also emphasised emotional, physical and health security and safety for all their members thus students, teachers and support staff. In the high performing schools, teaching and learning were being done free from fear and any sort of attack. The security was being enhanced through either of the following:

4.8.6.1 Availability of security personnel

The researcher had physically arranged for the school visits where it was established that all high performing schools had tight security in the school. This ensured security of students, teachers and school resources. The schools had watchmen who patrolled during the night.

4.8.6.2 Availability of school fence

The study has found that in high performing schools there was availability of watchmen and fenced to secure the school more except one that did not have a fence. When one prefect from one high performing school B was asked on security, he had this to say:

We are safe in the school and we have never registered a case of theft in the school and our general school environment is always clean with short grass even during rainy season and this frees us from snake bites and thieves.

The remarks above give evidence of safety in the school and this makes students learn free from safety worries hence concentrate on academic work and improvement on the school performance. This agrees with what Mubita (2021) advocates. He insinuates that learners of all ages require a safe learning environment for their better education and development. He further explains that learners must be safe from harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, danger, poverty, defence, protection and preservation of core values and threat to those values.

4.8.6.3 Promotion of health and hygiene

The study established that health issues were greatly considered in the high performing schools. The schools have a room designated as a dispensary. The dispensary stocked common items like First Aid Kit and medicines in particular painkillers. In the schools, there were days designated for general cleaning where the school surroundings were kept clean either through mopping, slashing or raking. The day designated was observed to be a Saturday. This was so because the students do not learn on the day. The researcher observed that most of the infrastructure like toilets, hostels, classrooms, administration block, dinning places were very clean and tidy. The period for general cleaning was a period of two hours ranging from 08:00-10:00 a.m. with very close supervision by the prefects and teachers more especially responsible for sanitation and teachers on duty.

The study found that in high performing schools, dust bins were placed at strategic points where students, teachers, support staff and visitors threw rubbish. This way of keeping the school environment clean and tidy ensured that the school communities were prevented from communicable diseases that could affect teaching and learning. The water buckets were also

readily available in the school where students, teachers, support staff and visitors could do handwashing after visiting the toilet or washing the dirt.

The study found that as a matter of maintaining or improving health and hygiene in the schools, inter-hostel competitions were introduced. These were done every Saturday where inspection was being done by the teachers on duty in the presence of the Health and Sanitation prefects and Hostel prefects. The hostels were being awarded points basing on the degree of cleanliness. These points were being announced on Monday assemblies and points were being accumulated and at the end of the term the winning hostels were being awarded money and then later organise a party for hostel members. This made hostels clean in the schools as such each hostel made a stride to make sure that it was as clean as possible.

The study found that in most high performing schools, a room or two were designated as sick bay(s). Any student who deemed unwell was being taken to an isolated room where being nursed and if sickness was beyond school management, referral was made to the hospital and the schools provided transport to the hospital. In the event that sickness looked serious, parents or guardians were being informed through a phone call. This concurs with (UNICEF, Progress of Nations 2013. p.13), which indicates that inadequate sanitation and water in schools jeopardize not only students' health but also their attendance; girls in particular are likely to be kept out of school if there are no sanitation facilities.

4.8.6.4 Goal setting

The study found that in five (5) of the eight (8) schools involved in the study, there were well crafted mission statements, visions and mottos that are clearly stated and guided in setting goals. All the mission statements and visions had components of hard work and academic excellence. Regardless of this, the study found that low performing schools did not initiate activities

supporting the schools' visions, missions, and mottos. The study found that it was only in high performing schools where it could be seen activities gearing towards the achievement of schools' goals.

4.9 How school-culture factors contribute to high or low performance in schools

This study also set out to establish as to how school-culture contribute to high or low performance in schools. School-culture factors to a large extent have a bearing on students' learning in schools that later impact on performance. There are enormous factors that can be cited in regard to this. The findings on the research question on how school-culture factors contribute to high or low performance in schools is presented in the sub-sections below:

4.9.1 Formulation of school rules and regulations

The study found that high performing schools' administration was cautious when coming up with school rules and regulations. The process of forming school rules and regulations adopted inclusive culture where teachers, students and parents must be involved in formulation.

The inclusive culture brought a sense of ownership to the rules and regulations by the stakeholders as such it became binding to them and difficult to break. This created a sense of orderliness in the schools hence the wave of good performance in the schools.

The study found a sharp contrast in low performing schools where the school rules and regulations were being formulated by the school administration alone. The rules and regulations were easily broken by the students as they felt were not consulted in their formulation. This led to disorder in the school. The stakeholders failed to collaborate and exert good effort towards attainment of school goals; hence, poor results emanated from this in the schools.

4.9.2 Discipline in the school

The study found that if everything in the school was done as scheduled, discipline was achieved. This was the experience of high performing schools. There was no time wasting in the schools. The teachers were bound to teach all the work as stipulated in the curriculum which made the students ready for examinations. Discipline in the schools made teachers and students comply with teaching and learning ethics like thorough preparation for lessons. The teachers were prepared with lesson plans and used varied teaching methods to enhance understanding among the learners that led to high performance. If punctuality does not dictate activities in the school, teachers and students are not time conscious when discharging their duties; hence, it becomes very difficult to meet school goals, resulting in to poor performance in the school.

4.9.3 School uniform

The study found that in high performing schools, students were obliged to be in school uniform at all times. This reduced the gap between the rich and the poor in the school. The poor did not feel out of place; hence, students worked in collaboration to share ideas hence excelled in studies and this was unlike in schools where wearing school uniform was not advocated. The gap between the rich and the poor was vividly seen. The poor found it very difficult to associate with their colleagues who were well-to-do as they suffered from inferiority complex which hampered interaction among them and the sharing of knowledge among students hence poor performance in schools and the uniform governs learner thinking capacity.

The findings concur with Anderson (2002), who indicates that the idea that how one dresses effects how one behaves and performs is not a new concept. Schools in 1950's and 1960's had campaigns to try and curb juvenile delinquency and slogans such as "Dress right, and act right" were heard throughout schools.

4.9.4 Interpersonal relationships that exist in the schools

The study examined the following parameters to assess interpersonal relationships in the sampled schools: Teacher-Teacher, Teacher-Student, Student-Student, Teacher-Administration, Teacher-Parent and School-Community relationships.

The study unveiled that in high performing schools, cordial relationships were established in all areas and this easily necessitated easy collaboration among stakeholders and parent involvement in school activities. There was team work among the teachers and teachers easily covered up for each other in the event that one was absent. The students' relationship was also cordial and they were able to assist each other in school related activities. The students were able to borrow from each other prescribed textbooks during studies and in other cases seen in group discussions where they assigned each other leadership roles like chairperson and secretary of the group. This is in support of Neo-classical theory which aims at promoting interrelationships within group members in an organisation. One prefect from school C had this to say to complement this:

> *………. there is always order and discipline in the school. Any student in the school is at liberty to associate with anyone regardless of class level and there is no teasing or bullying in the school, I can assure you.*

The remarks were evidence enough that discipline and orderliness support teaching and learning hence improvement of performance. These findings concur with Brown (2004) who postulates that an effective and a healthy school-culture supports teacher-student, teacher-teacher and student-student relationship. The effective and healthy school-culture gives opportunity and venues for togetherness, discussing fundamental values, taking responsibility, coming together as a community and celebrating individual and group success.

4.9.5 Commitment and dedicated to duty

The findings in the study have found that teachers in the high performing schools were duty bound. They did not leave stone unturned to make sure that students were assisted accordingly. The teachers were seen having make-up classes with students after learning or before learning periods. Some were even heard arranging classes on weekends or holidays. The teachers expressed the spirit of commitment to duty.

In agreement with the above sentiments, one prefect at school D had this to say:

> *Most of the times if we go to the staffroom, we see our teachers busy working either marking students' work, preparing lesson plans or discussing how best to approach a topic to enhance understanding among students.*

The remarks from the prefect at school D gave enough evidence that teachers at the school D were dedicated and committed to duty. This indicates that dedication and commitment to duty improves performance in the school.

The community around the school were able to carry out development projects in the school facilitated by Parents and Teachers Association Executive members. These executive members in the schools were vigilant in discharging their duties. This in the long run created a very good conducive environment for teaching and learning that enabled the students to perform well.

The findings on low performing schools have been contrary to what was noted in the high performing schools. The schools were crippled with indiscipline cases ranging from absenteeism, late coming to school, poor relationships among stakeholders in the schools. The students in the schools were not autonomous as were seen unable to do class assignments on their own. They would always want someone to guide them. The teachers in the schools were seen fed up with behaviour of students and they had little respect for the teachers hence teachers were unwilling to

assist them. This nature of relationship created bad environment for teaching and learning hence poor results in the schools.

4.9.6 Enforcement of school rules and regulations

The findings from the study show that formulation of school rules and regulations is one thing and enforcement of such rules and regulations is another. The data collected on this indicated that in high performing schools Head-teachers, teachers and prefects cooperate on enforcement of school rules and regulations. This was echoed by what one prefect at school C had to say:

> *There is always order and discipline in the school. Any student in the school is at liberty to associate with any one regardless of class level and there is no teasing and bullying in the school I can assure you.*

This was echoed by one head teacher at school B who had this to say:

> *We have an invisible fence here to the visitors but we the owners of land are able to visualise it. None of our students can cross. I know most of the visitors tend to wonder why they never see students in that zone after our imaginary boundary.*

The remarks above from the prefect and Head-teacher were evidence enough that in schools B and C there was enforcement of school rules and regulations. The enforcement of school rules and regulations instilled discipline in the schools hence improved performance in the schools.

To the contrary, this is not what happened in low-performing schools where rules and regulations were laid down very well but never enforced. This resulted in indiscipline cases in such schools as anyone in the school behaved the way he or she chose. There was need for team work in enforcement of school rules and regulations.

The school administration, teachers, prefects and parents were all to work as a team to ensure that the school rules and regulations were adhered to. If this was to be achieved, sanity would be

brought in the school as orderliness of doing things in the school would be achieved leading to high performance in the school.

In the contrary, when enforcement of school rules and regulations is not done, then the school labours in vain. There is nothing tangible that is obtained from it. The school operates in a helter-skelter. This makes the school not feasible to attain its goals leading to poor performance in the school.

This was in contrast with what happened at low performing schools. The Head-teacher at school F had this to say:

> *School rules and regulations are really available but compliance by the students has been a challenge. On weekly basis, we have cases concerning students violating school rules and regulations. The most common indiscipline in the school has been students found out of bounds and reporting late for classes. The school has no security as is not fenced hence unable to track late comers as there are various points through which students access entry to the school. The students sneak in the classroom or wait until break time to join their friends. This retards students' performance.*

The remark from the Head-teacher at school F are enough evidence that low performing schools at not good at enforcement of school rules and regulations. This resulted in indiscipline in the school leading to poor performance. These findings concur with Annual Report on school safety (2000) which postulates that law enforcement has been acknowledged as a potentially important partner for schools in planning and implementing school safety efforts.

Table 4.4: Responses of Head-teachers on some aspects of school factors that affect students' learning

	Aspects of school factors	Responses from H/Ts		
		Yes	No	Unsure
1.	Our school has clear vision, mission, motto and values.	7	1	0
2.	The school vision, mission, motto and values geared towards performance.	6	1	1
3.	There is collegiality and collaboration within the school.	6	2	0

The study found that seven (7) schools have clear school visions, missions, mottos and values while two (2) schools have unclear visions, missions, mottos and values. The study regarding school vision, mission, motto and values gearing towards performance, out of the eight (8) respondents six (6) indicated that they are geared towards performance and one (1) respondent indicated that they are not geared towards performance and one (1) respondent indicated that was not sure about them. On collegiality and collaboration within the school, six (6) indicated that there is collegiality and collaboration within the school while two (2) indicated that there was no collegiality and collaboration within the school. Table 4.4 shows how routines and norms are affected in schools' understudy.

Table 4.5: Establishment of routines and norms in the sampled schools

	School routines and norms.	Highly perform		Lowly perform	
	Responses	Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	Preparation time for teachers and students.	6	2	3	5
2.	Prep and library periods on the time table.	8	0	0	8
3.	School rules and regulations guiding students' behaviour.	7	1	4	6
4.	Do the teachers cover the teaching syllabus adequately?	7	1	2	6
5.	Is there too much absenteeism by the students?	0	8	7	1
6.	Do teachers have too much work load at the school?	1	7	7	1

The findings have found that six (6) heads of departments in high performing schools indicated that there is preparation for both teachers and students while two (2) heads of departments in a high performing school indicated they do not prepare and five (5) heads of departments in low performing schools indicated that both teachers and students do not have time to prepare while three (3) heads of departments in low performing schools indicated that both teachers and students have time to prepare. In high performing schools they have prep and library periods on the timetable while in low performing schools they do not have.

On school rules and regulations guiding students' behaviour, seven (7) heads of departments in high performing schools indicated yes while one (1) indicated no and in low performing schools, two (2) indicated yes while six (6) indicated no. On adequate coverage of teaching syllabus,

seven (7) heads of departments indicated yes while one (1) head of department indicated no while in low performing schools, two (2) indicated yes while six (6) indicated no. About absenteeism in the school eight (8) heads of departments in high performing schools indicated that there is no much absenteeism in the schools while none indicated yes and in low performing schools seven (7) heads of departments indicated that there is much absenteeism and one (1) indicated there is no much absenteeism.

On teachers' workloads, one (1) head of department indicated that there is too much workload among the teachers and seven (7) heads of departments indicated that there is no too much workload among the teachers and in low performing schools, seven (7) heads of departments indicated that there is too much workload among the teachers and one indicated that there is no too much workload among the teachers.

The findings concur with Capon (2004) who observes that school routines include for example, when the time school starts and ends, preparation time, lunch break and other activities carried out in the school. This includes discipline, library lessons and education to both teachers and parents on daily activities. The schools must however make sure that they abide by the codes and ethics of teaching profession. They need to enforce rules and regulations that promote teaching and learning in the schools.

4.10 How to mitigate low performance in secondary schools in Malawi

This study has found that there are several strategies which can be used to improve or establish school-culture that can improve performance in low performing secondary schools in Malawi. These strategies include:

4.10.1 Motivational strategies

The study has established various strategies that schools can employ to mitigate low performance in secondary schools. For example, the study has found that, in order to improve the performance of learners, teachers whose students do exceptionally well during national examinations need to be given incentives so that they replicate the performance in the succeeding years. The study has further found that, in order to improve the performance of learners, students who also pass the examinations during national examinations such that they qualify for public universities must be invited to school after the results so that the incumbent candidates can borrow a leaf from them. These students need to be rewarded for such a performance. According to Anku, Amewugah and Glover (2018) individuals need incentives to perform their tasks in a well-organised manner.

The school administration must at all the times make sure that teachers undergo in-service trainings on termly basis either school or cluster based. This enables teachers to share some skills in teaching and add knew knowledge to some teachers hence improvement in imparting knowledge to the learners. This was evidenced at high performing School A in the study where the Head-teacher of the school attributed high performance of the school to motivation strategies used by the school to motivate student. For example, the Head teacher remarked that,

> *At this school, we cannot close a term without organising an inset at either department or cluster levels. In these insets, teachers share knowledge and their experiences. This improves teaching and learning in the school hence good results in the school.*

This agrees with Moonen and Voogt (2001) who indicate that in-service trainings teachers share information reflectively.

4.10.2 Collaborative planning and team work

The study has established that if schools can plan collaboratively and instil team work, they are bound to achieve better results. When this is done all the teachers' efforts will be targeted at achieving the learner intended outcomes and this will improve performance of learners. This was evidenced at high performing School D in the study where the Head-teacher of the school attributed high performance of the school to Collaborative planning and team work at the school. For example, the head-teacher of the school remarked that,

> *At this school, we work as a unit. We don't segregate young, old, poor or rich. We*
> *always work together in short; we coexist and this does not exclude the teachers."*

The above words of the Head-teacher show that collaborative planning improves the performance of students at a school. This is supported by the Neo-classical theory which advocates team spirit in an organisation.

4.10.3 Involvement of key role players in education in decision making

The study has also noted that schools perform well where critical thinking is involved as correct decisions are made. This makes the school administration make informed decision targeted at improving performance in the school.

This was evidenced at high performing School C in the study where the PTA Executive member of the school attributed high performance of the school to involvement of key role players in education of students in decision making at a school. For example, the PTA Executive member of school C remarked that,

> *We run the school collaboratively with the school administration. We know most*
> *of the problems the school faces. We intervene on issues of motivation and this is*
> *a school of the people for the people and by the people.*

The above words of the PTA Executive show that involvement of key role players in education of learners in decision making at a school improves the performance of students at a school. This concurs with Reed (2008) who informs about the importance of involvement of stakeholders in environmental decisions in improving the quality of actions as environmental problems are more complex and require more flexible decision making.

4.10.4 Availability of teaching and learning materials

The study has also established that if a school is to improve in performance of its learners, teaching and learning materials must be adequate in the school. This will lead teachers and students to source out a lot of information that may help in improving the quality of teaching and learning. This was evidenced at high performing School B in the study where the Head-teacher of the school attributed high performance of the school to adequate availability of teaching and learning materials at the school.

For example, the Head teacher of the school B remarked that,

> *Our school has adequate teaching and learning resources and the teachers are very resourceful on provision of locally available resources (TALULAR) to enhance understanding in learners hence high performance. If I can grant you chance to have a glance at the walls in each and every class you will see the walls talking through being print rich. Even during national examinations, we do not struggle with chemicals. They are adequately stocked in our laboratories. All this has helped our school perform highly.*

The above words of the Head-teacher show that adequate availability of teaching and learning at a school improves the performance of students at a school. These findings agree with Ratsatsi (2005) that availability of teaching and learning materials improved the performance of learners in schools as has been the case of Botswana.

4.10.5 Clear school mission and vision statements

The study has found that for a school to perform well, there must be a clear mission and vision statement of the school. There is need for crafting an inspiring vision, backed by a clear, focused and challenging mission, which must be accompanied by the school adopting child centred modes of instruction and assessments practices that are clearly linked to the vision and mission and tailored to the needs and interests of the students. All the efforts made by the school must be targeting at achieving what the school mission and vision stipulate.

This is in line with the Neo-classic theory which advocates that if work is to be achieved as expected, there is need for the appointment of a supervisor who is to give clear directions as to how the work is to be done. This was evidenced at high performing School A in the study where the Head-girl of the school attributed high performance of the school to the school having a clear school mission and vision and having the schools' teaching and learning activities aligned to achievement of the vision and the mission.

For example, the Head-girl of the school remarked that,

> *You will never hear noise in the school at any time during a learning day even in the absence of a teacher. For instance, as soon as the sire wails for school activity, we go straight for the activity like assembly, prep or class. No-one pushes us around. We study in a quiet environment without any disturbance.*

The above words of the Head-girl shows that a clear school mission and vision and having the schools' teaching and learning activities aligned to achievement of the vision and the mission improves the performance of students at a school.

The study has established that all schools that whose students perform well have adequate qualified teachers in all subjects.

The findings concur with Lezotte (1991) who proposed that in effective schools, there is a clearly articulated school mission through which the staff share an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.

4.10.6 Creation of strong school-culture

School-culture does not come out of the blues. It is constructed. The school leaders must develop necessary steps to build a stronger culture in their own schools. This can be done by consistently observing teachers at work more often, emulating strong school instructional leaders' leadership styles. It is believed that dramatic improvements in instructional culture are possible and to some extent within a year. This agrees with Greenhouse Schools (2012), which show that keys are to diagnose areas for improvement in instructional culture, create and consistently implement an action plan based on the success of other schools, and monitor progress throughout the year.

There is also need for a close, supportive teacher-student and student-student relationships. There must be many opportunities and venues for creating culture, discussing fundamental values, taking responsibility, teaming as a community and celebrating individual and group success. The leadership style that encourages and protects trust, on-the-job learning, flexibility, risk taking, innovation and adaptation to change, data-driven decision-making systems that draw on timely, accurate, qualitative and quantitative information about progress toward the vision and sophisticated knowledge about an organisational change, and unwavering support from parents.

This study has found that creation of strong culture in the school improves performance. This was evidenced at high performing school C where the Head-teacher of the school remarked that,

> *In the school teachers and students are always busy either teaching or learning in*
> *class, writing lesson plans or assisting some learners who seem to have problems*
> *in some areas covered in class or questions obtained from other sources.*

The above sentiments from the Head-teacher are evidence enough that there is a strong culture in the school that supports teaching and learning hence improving performance in the school.

4.10.7 Development projects that support teaching and learning

The study found that availability of development projects that support and teaching and learning improves performance of learners. For example, the study found that in other highly performing schools involved in this study, the Parent and Teacher Association or individuals and other organisations provide solar panels to prolong supply of electricity during blackout periods so that students keep on studying in the event Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi (ESCOM) load sheds the school.

The school PTA and alumni in other high performing schools carry out some development projects like renovating hostels, classrooms, toilets and even teacher houses to make sure that the environment is conducive to teaching and learning. Some high performing schools incorporate members of PTA in the discipline committee and prefects and their input in the committee is taken on board so long as it is considered constructive. This study found that development projects that support teaching and learning improves performance in the school. This was evidenced by remarks from PTA Executive member. For example, an Executive member of PTA at school C one of the high performing schools had this to say,

> *We run the school collaboratively with the school administration. We know most of the problems the school faces. We intervene on issues of motivation of teachers and students, development projects and discipline issues. We also interfere on issues of land encroachment in the school. We do that because we know school boundaries much better as we are the natives of the land and school administrators come and go.*

The above words of a member of PTA show that availability of development projects that support and teaching and learning improves performance of learners. This concurs with Barrret and Zhang (2015) who postulate that the evidence for importance of safe and healthy schools to promote learning is strong, but investigations are urgently needed into how to make this happen effectively in the context of existing country-level regulations.

4.10.8 Parents commitment to their children education

The parents in high performing schools are too keen on students' performance such that they establish a day when to collect end of term results. On this day all parents come and upon collection of the school reports, they sit side by side with their children or wards and where necessary they request for the subject teacher to find out about behaviour of their children or wards and their activeness in class and where necessary, they ask about their children or ward to explain about performance in areas where they did not fare well.

This is not practical in low performing school. Parents are only involved where school fees adjustment is to be done in relation to cost of living. Other stakeholders are not involved in development projects neither motivation of teachers nor discipline issues. They feel it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that the environment is conducive to teaching and learning. The school administration does it all on its own to make sure that teaching and learning take place in the school.

The parents in low performing schools they look irresponsible with I don't care type of spirit regarding the school reports of their children or wards. Even if they are communicated the date to collect the school reports a handful of parents come. This is evidence enough to justify that parents have little interest on the welfare of the learners in the schools. There are heaps of uncollected school reports in most schools where students do not perform to the expected

standards. The parents could collect the school reports at their own prescribed time and they do not have any time for follow-up on their children or ward performance.

This study found out that parents at school D are very committed to their children's education and this improves performance. This was evidenced by the remarks from the Head-teacher of school D who had this to say,

> *Parents in the school are very cooperative where issues concerning learners crop up. So far, they have managed to construct school laboratories for Chemistry and Biology and also two teacher houses using their own initiatives and whenever results are out, they all rush to collect the school reports of their children or wards.*

These remarks from the Head-teacher clearly show that parents are committed to the education of their children. This commitment motivates the learners, hence work hard and improve their performance. This concurs with Epstein (2009) who indicates that parental involvement in the education of students begins at home with the parents providing a safe and healthy environment, appropriate learning experiences, support, and a positive attitude about school and several studies show that there is increased academic achievement with students that have involved parents.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

Chapter four has presented the findings in the eight schools four high performing and four low performing in CWED. The findings have found that successful schools adhere to complex patterns of beliefs, values, attitudes, expectations, ideas, and behaviours that ensured that students work so hard that they attain better grades at national examinations and this is in contrast with low performing schools. The administration of low performing schools lack reinforcement of such attributes and students lack compliance even if norms and routines are established. This renders students and teachers lack direction in their activities and finally not perform well at the final examinations. It has also highlighted how school-culture can be improved to enhance performance.

The learners in high performing schools have higher degree of autonomy as are able to accomplish assignments without relying on the teachers. There is also good motivation for teachers and learners in the high performing schools as opposed to low performing schools. The high performing schools embrace team work and collaboration among stakeholders as opposed to low performing schools. The high performing schools have well-articulated school visions, missions and values that are geared towards achievement of school goals.

5.2 Conclusions and Implications of the Study

5.2.1 Introduction

This part of the chapter concludes the study and presents its contribution to the body of knowledge on influence of school-culture on students learning in high and low performing

schools in Malawi. The part is made of three sub-sections namely the study conclusion, implications, and suggested areas for further research.

5.2.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded there are a lot of factors that contribute to high or low performance in secondary schools. The high performing schools advocate instructional leadership hence achieve collaborative planning and team work and this is in contrast with low performing schools. When high performing schools are laying down rules and regulations, learners are taken on board so that they develop sense of ownership to the rules and regulations hence adherence to the rules and regulations. This is in contrast with low performing schools where schools and regulation are mostly made by school administration and learners are told to comply though without enforcement. The teachers in the high performing schools have passion for the learners to learn and the teachers are willing to assist the learners at all the times. This gesture in turn leads to high performance in the schools.

Some of low performing schools have well qualified teachers but lack the zeal of being compassionate with the learners. Most of the teachers have negative attitude towards the learners as they look at them as not hard working and dull. The teachers regard it as a waste of time concentrating on the learners who cannot succeed in life academically. There are generally poor relationships among teachers, learners, parents and other stake holders as the academic results in the schools are always disappointing.

The study also concluded on the school factors that contribute to high or low performance in schools. In schools where there are effective teachers, learners tend to perform better during examinations and this is opposed to schools where teachers are lazy, uncooperative and unwilling to assist the learners. The schools with adequate infrastructure provide comfort to the

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learners as they have enough room where to attend lessons and study hence no or low absenteeism in the schools resulting to high performance unlike schools where there is inadequate infrastructure.

The schools with adequate teaching and learning materials make teachers and learners rich in teaching and learning information respectively. Teachers get well prepared for the lessons and impart correct knowledge to the learners hence learners do well during examinations as opposed to schools with inadequate teaching and learning.

The nature of selection of learners for secondary education is another area of great concern. The government selects learners to various schools depending on their performance during national examinations. This leads to more able learners being selected to same school rendering struggling learners selected to same schools hence failing to help each other on academic related activities hence poor results in such schools.

The study further concluded on how school-culture can be improved in order to improve performance in schools. There is need to react to measures that hinder performance in the schools. The schools that perform poorly must borrow a leaf from schools that perform better so that they emulate strategies that lead to high performance. The Head-teachers of low performing schools need to undergo training in leadership and management so that they develop good leadership skills that may lead to high performance in the schools.

The study has found conclusively that school-culture plays a significant role on students' learning in both high and low performing schools. This, therefore, entails that school administrators must be very cautious when come up with their school-culture. This study will contribute to a body of knowledge to schools' administration on how they can construct their cultures so that they remain successful.

5.3 Contribution of the Study to the Education Community

This study looks ideal in seeking solutions regarding to disparity in performance among learners in schools in Malawi. The government's effort in uplifting performance in secondary schools will be recognized as some positive results will be recognised. There will be registered positive behaviour towards teaching and learning as both teachers and the learners will get dedicated to school work. The schools that are low performers will tend to borrow a leaf from high performing schools. There will also be expectation of all stakeholders performing their expected tasks that may contribute to teaching and learning. This later brings better results in the secondary schools.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings of the study have found that school-culture plays a vital role on the influence of students' learning in schools and other factors besides it. The study has made several recommendations to various stakeholders like schools and Ministry of Education Science and Technology.

5.4.1 Recommendations to Schools

The Head-teachers must not sit idle while they note that things are not adding up in schools. They need at all times be assessing the situation in the schools and take course of action towards improving state of affairs in their schools. The Head-teachers must adopt instructional leadership style in order to improve school performance. The Head-teacher must work in collaboration with other stakeholders in the school. The Head-teacher must be able to motivate both teachers and learners in the school for better behaviour displayed. The school leader must instill team work in the school to achieve success in the school. The Head-teachers must be subjected to in-service training in Leadership and Management if they lack ideal leadership skills in running the

schools. The Head-teachers must at times that they conduct Continuous Professional Development (CPDs)Projects to make sure that teachers are subjected to trainings that add value to their knowledge on teaching and learning. These workshops or trainings could be school based or cluster based so that teachers sharpen their teaching skills.

The Head-teacher must have goal setting and this could be stipulated in the school vision or mission. The school leader must make sure that he or she instills discipline in the teachers and the learners. There must be orderliness in the school coupled with dedication of teaching and learning. There must be regular PTA meetings where issues concerning the school can be tabled and get resolved with the involvement of parents.

The school community needs to be empowered to carry out some development projects that support learning. These activities may include: construction of teachers' houses, hostels and school fences at village level where they can mould bricks and mobilise other resources to help in teaching and learning. The community can also support the school with mobilisation of teaching and learning materials like purchase of text books for the learners. The school community can also assist in construction, nurturing and reinforcement of school rules and regulations.

The high performing schools are recommended to maintain the school practices that they practice while the low performing schools are recommended to borrow a leaf from high performing ones. In low performing schools, the teachers must always know that they are a hub towards success of the learners. Teachers must always be effective to the learners. They must be dedicated to duty and willing to assist the learners at all times. The teachers must be resourceful at all times to ensure that the learners are learning regardless of inadequacy of resources. The teachers must always bear in mind that they abide by the codes and ethics of the teaching

profession as they are role models of the learners. This implies that the teachers must be disciplined. The teachers must be able to plan their lessons and use various teaching methods so that the learners grasp the concepts taught.

5.4.2 Recommendations to Ministry of Education Science and Technology

The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) are recommended to ensure that all schools have adequate qualified teachers in all the subjects. This will ensure that learners are subjected to same quality of teachers in terms of qualification. The Ministry should also make sure that all schools are supplied with adequate teaching and learning materials. This Ministry must also ensure that teachers' houses are adequate in the schools and that hostels are also available to ensure that students reside within the school premises.

When rolling out new curriculum, the Ministry must make sure that teaching and learning material are readily available and distributed in the schools prior to implementation of the new curriculum. These teaching and learning materials could be like prescribed textbooks, syllabi and supplementary books.

When selecting learners for secondary education, there is need to select learning basing on their secondary schools' locality. This will enable selection of learners with mixed abilities at the same school unlike selection basing on performance at national examinations.

5.5 Further Research Areas

The areas of future related research emanating from this research could be:

- An investigation of Social-cultural factors affecting learning in schools
- Assessment of School-culture on performance of students' tertiary level.
- An investigation of School-culture on performance of learners in basic education

5.6 Summary

The chapter has highlighted what stakeholders would do to ensure that all school perform to the expected standards. It has singled out stakeholders like schools and Ministry of Education Science and Technology. The chapter has also suggested other areas of further research.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEAD TEACHERS

Do not write your name on the questionnaire. Information provided will be used for academic purposes only. Any information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

RESEARCH TOPIC: INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL-CULTURE ON STUDENTS' LEARNING IN HIGH AND LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Name of institution: _____

Sex: _____ Age: _____

Academic qualification: _____

Headship experience: _____

Duration at the school: _____

School enrolment: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

Teachers by gender: Male: _____ Female: _____

B. SCHOOL FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE.

1. a. Do your school vision, mission statement and motto inspire your students to excel in their studies? If yes, explain.

_____

_____

_____

b. What core values comprise the vision, mission statement and motto of your school?

_____

_____

_____

c. Does the teaching and learning in the school reflect to the vision, mission statement and motto of the school? If yes, explain.

_____

_____

2. What role do the following stakeholders play to improve teaching and learning in schools?

i. Parents and Teachers Association (PTA):

_____

_____

_____

_____

ii. Board of Governors:

_____

_____

_____

_____

iii. Government:

_____

_____

_____

_____

iv. Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs):

_____

_____

_____

v. Teachers:

_____

_____

_____

vi. Students:

_____

_____

3. How do you rate the teaching and learning at your school?

i. Excellent ___ii. Very good_ iii. Good___ iv. Average____ v. Poor____ vi. Very poor____

4. Rating the extent of influence of school routines and norms have on performance.

Tick the appropriate response according to stated degree

SCALE1. – Strongly Agree**2.**– Agree**3.** – Disagree**4.** – Strongly Disagree**5.** – Un Sure

		1	2	3	4	5
i.	Routines/norms					
ii.	Administrators provide visible, ongoing support for school innovations					
iii.	Team work among staff members					
iv.	Teachers supporting students' learning					
v.	Administrators empathetic with teachers' welfare					
vi.	Teacher collaboration on class room experience					
vii.	Teachers practice inclusive education					
viii.	Collaboration of school stakeholders improves performance					
ix.	Leadership style in the school instructional					
x.	An inspiring vision, clear, limited and challenging mission lead to success					
xi.	Collegial support among teachers, students and other stakeholders					
xii.	Leadership roles are equally shared by teachers and administrators					
xiii.	Teachers discuss ways on how to improve students' academic performance					
xiv.	Teachers professionally share and learn from one another					
xv.	Teachers and administrators collaborate in development of programmes and new policies					
xvi.	Teachers feel comfortable in providing suggestions to					

	colleagues about ways in which to improve teaching and learning in the classrooms.				
xvii.	Teachers spending time together in professional reflection about their work				
xviii.	Teachers adequately plan teaching and learning activities to accommodate individual differences among students.				
xix.	Teachers get required assistant from administrators and colleagues to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms				

5. We are in the Covid-19 era, teaching and learning have been heavily hampered, what type of learning do you practice in the school? Tick in the box Yes or No.

	Yes	No
i. Accelerated learning	☐	☐
ii. Remediation	☐	☐
iii. Make-up lessons	☐	☐
iv. Holiday lessons	☐	☐
v. Week-end lessons	☐	☐
vi. Before and after normal teaching	☐	☐
vii. None of the above	☐	☐

6. a. What are the subjects in the curriculum that are not offered in the school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

b. Why are these subjects not offered at your school?

_____

_____

C. FACTORS AFFECTING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Availability of qualified teachers in the school.

In the table indicate number of qualified teachers against the subjects taught at your school:

Subjects in the school curriculum	Number of teachers qualified to teach	Number of teachers teaching but not qualified to teach	Number of qualified teachers but they do not teach
i. Additional Mathematics			
ii. Agriculture			
iii. Bible Knowledge			
iv. Biology			
v. Business Studies			
vi. Chemistry			

vii.	Computer Studies			
viii.	Chichewa			
ix.	Clothing and Textile			
x.	Creative Art			
xi.	Creative Arts			
xii.	Craft Designs			
xiii.	English			
xiv.	French			
xv.	Geography			
xvi.	History			
xvii.	Home Economics			
xviii.	Life skills			
xix.	Mathematics			
xx.	Metal Work			
xxi.	Physics			
xxii.	Physical Education			
xxiii.	Performing Arts			
xxiv.	Religious and Moral Education			
xxv.	Social Studies			
xxvi.	Technical Drawing			
xxvii.	Wood Work			

2. Availability of school infrastructure for effective teaching and learning and other services that support teaching and learning:

	Infrastructure/Service	Quantity	Condition (good/poor/adequate or not
i.	Classrooms		
ii.	School furniture		
iii.	Head teacher office		
iv.	Teacher houses		
v.	Library		
vi.	Science Laboratories		
vii.	Computer Laboratory		
viii.	Home Economic Laboratory		
ix.	Ramps (Structure for disability)		
x.	Electricity		
xi.	Potable water		
xii.	Sick Bay		
xiii.	School Hall		
xiv.	Students Desks		

xv. Store room		
xvi. Staffroom		
xvii. School fence		
xviii. Watchmen		

Any other comment on the availability of school infrastructure for effective teaching and learning.

_____

_____

_____

3. Availability of teaching and learning materials.

	Subject in the school curriculum	Teaching and Learning Resources	Quantity	Condition Good/poor/ adequate for students or not
i.	Additional Mathematics	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
ii.	Agriculture	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
iii.	Bible Knowledge	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
iv.	Biology	Syllabus, Teacher's guides, books and apparatus		
v.	Business Studies	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
vi.	Chemistry	Syllabus, Teacher's guides, books and chemicals		
vii.	Computer Studies	Syllabus, Teacher's guides, books, Computers and printers		
viii.	Chichewa	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
ix.	Clothing and Textile	Syllabus, Teacher's guides, books and materials		
x.	English	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xi.	French	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xii.	Geography	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xiii.	History	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xiv.	Home Economics	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xv.	Life skills	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xvi.	Mathematics	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xvii.	Metal Work	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xviii.	Physics	Syllabus, Teacher's guides, books and materials		

xix.	Physical Education	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xx.	Performing Arts	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xxi.	Religious and Moral Education	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xxii.	Social Studies	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xxiii.	Chichewa	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xxiv.	English	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xxv.	French	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		
xxvi.	Chichewa	Syllabus, Teacher's guides and books		

Any other general comment(s) on availability of teaching and learning materials for effective teaching and learning.

_____

4. Availability of sanitation facilities.

Sanitary facility	Quantity	Condition (Good/poor/ adequate or not
i. Male toilets		
ii. Female toilets		
iii. Boys' toilets		
iv. Girls' toilets		
v. Change rooms for girls		
vi. Hand washing facilities		
vii. Rubbish pits		
viii. Dust bins		
ix. Sanitary pads for girls		

Any other general comments on sanitation.

_____

_____

_____

5. Availability of important documents for supporting teaching and learning.

Document	Mark by ticking if available	Functional or not
i. Time Book		
ii. Period Register		
iii. Log Book		
iv. Calendar of Events		
v. PTA Meetings minutes		
vi. Time Table		
vii. Staff Meeting Minutes		
viii. School Management		
ix. Meetings Minutes		
x. Assessment Records		
xi. Curriculum Assessment		
xii. Framework		
xiii. Duty Book		

Any other comments on availability of important documents for supporting effective teaching and learning.

_____

_____

_____

6. Availability of assessment records.

Assessment record	Indicate by ticking if available and state if functional
i. Mark Book	
ii. Progress reports	
iii. Scholastic record	
iv. End of term results records	
v. MANEB results summary records	

Any other general comment on Assessment records.

_____

_____

_____

7. Types of Assessments available in the school.

Type of Assessment	Tick against the Assessment
i. Weekly tests	
ii. Mid-term tests	
iii. End of Topic tests	
iv. Monthly tests	
v. Oral Questions	
vi. Daily Assignments	
vii. End of Term tests	

Any other comments on the type of assessments used in the school.

_____

_____

_____

8. Inspection and monitoring of implementation of the curriculum by Ministry of Education Science and Technology.

_____

i. When was your school last inspected by Department of Quality Assurance (DQUAS)?

_____

ii. How many times has your school been visited for inspection?

_____

iii. What were major strengths and weaknesses registered at your school during inspection(s)?

_____

_____

_____

iv. How did you react to the weakness(es) to ensure that teaching and learning is enhanced in the school?

_____

_____

_____

9. School-based supervision by School Management.

i. How many times have you supervised your teachers in the school?

_____

ii. What were the major strengths in your supervision(s)?

_____

_____

iii. What were the major weaknesses identified in the supervision(s)?

_____

_____

_____

10. General comment(s) on the school factors affecting school performance.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Does your school motto, vision and mission statement inspire your students to excel in studies?

_____

If yes, explain.

_____

_____

_____

12. Does the teaching and learning at the school reflect to the motto, vision and mission statement?

_____

If yes, how?

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. Does the general students' discipline gear towards your school's motto, vision and mission statement as enshrined in your school?

_____

     If yes, justify.

_____

_____

_____

14. What are the academic routines that support your school's motto, vision and mission statement?

_____

_____

15. How do teachers and students relate to achieve academic excellence?

_____

16. How does the school operate in terms of management, physical environment, availability of resources?

_____

_____

Thank you for your cooperation!!!!!!!

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

Do not write your name on the questionnaire. Information provided will be used for academic purposes only. Any information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

RESEARCH TOPIC: INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL-CULTURE ON STUDENTS' LEARNING IN HIGH AND LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Name of institution: _____

Sex: _____ Age: _____

Academic qualification: _____

Work experience: _____

Duration at the school: _____

School enrolment: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

Teachers by gender: Male: _____ Female: _____

RESEARCH TOPIC: Influence of school-culture on students' learning in high or low performing schools.

1. At what time do you start and end classes?

   _____

2. Is there any preparation time for teachers and students?

   _____

3. Do you have set time for breaks?

_____

4. Do you incorporate prep and library periods in your teaching time table?

_____

5. Do you use school rules and regulations to guide students' behaviour?

_____

6. How do you motivate learners in the school on academic performance?

_____

_____

7. a. Suggest the school-culture factors that negatively affect learning of students at the school?

_____

_____

_____

b. How do these factors affect learning among students?

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. a. What strategies are employed to mitigate challenges posed by these school-culture factors?

_____

_____

_____

b. What role do stakeholders play in the improvement of teaching and learning in the school?

i. Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) or/ and Board of Governors (BOG).

_____

_____

_____

_____

ii. Teachers

_____

_____

_____

_____

iii. Students

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

iv. Government

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. a. What are the prime indiscipline issues in your school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

b. How are these indiscipline issues resolved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. a. How are rules and regulations formulated in this school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

b. Which rule(s) and regulation(s) are or are commonly violated if any?

_____

_____

_____

_____

c. Why do you think is or are the rule(s) and regulation(s) violated so much?

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. a. How do you ensure that School routines, School motto and School mission statement speak one voice?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

b. What assessment record(s) do you have in the school? Please tick against the record available in the school and is functional.

ASSESSMENT RECORDS

TICK OR CROSS ✓ ✗

i. Mark book	
ii. Scholastic records	
iii. MANEB results	
iv. End of term results	
v. Continuous Assessment records	

12. a. Which subjects are not offered yet are on academic curriculum?

_____

_____

_____

b. Why are these subjects not offered in the school?

_____

_____

_____

13. What type of extracurricular activities do you have in the school? Please tick against each activity in the table below:

S/N   Tick or cross   ✅ ❌

	Extracurricular activity	Response
1	Chase	
2	Draught	
3	Football	
4	Netball	
5	Volleyball	
6	Table tennis	
7	Debate	
8	Science club	
9	Dancing	

b. Do you have any general comment on extracurricular activities? If so, comment.

_____

_____

_____

14. a. When was your school last inspected by the Department of Quality Assurance? (DQUAS)?

_____

b. What challenges were noted in the school during inspection?

_____

_____

c. How were these challenges rectified after inspection was done?

_____

_____

_____

d. What impact(s) has or have the improvements brought towards students' performance?

_____

_____

_____

15. a. What leadership style(s) do you practice in guiding the school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

b. How do the leadership style(s) assist(s) you in running the school?

_____

_____

_____

c. Has any member of the school ever complained about your leadership style?

_____

_____

_____

If yes, what has been the complaint?

_____

_____

d. After the complaint was registered, has there been any change?

_____

Thank you for your cooperation!!!!!

APPENDIX 3: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH PREFECTS

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Name of school: _____

Prefects present: Boys: _____   Girls_____

Classes of prefects: _____

Researcher' name: _____

Date: _____

QUESTIONS

1. Is it a better conclusion to say boys deserve better education than girls?

    Girls' responses_____ Boys' responses_____

2. Reasons given by learners for their responses.

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. Could you suggest some of the factors affecting your performance at this school? The

    factors could be positive or negative.

    a. Boys' responses: _____

    b. Girls' responses: _____

4. How best do you think can these factors be addressed to improve or maintain

    performance in the school?

_____

_____

_____

What do teachers do to encourage girls perform equally as boys in the school?

Girls' responses: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Boys'responses:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. What are some of the activities that you are engaged in from the time you arrive at the school till you knock off?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Which are some of the activities that help to improve learning and performance?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Which are some of the activities that negatively affect your performance?

_____

_____

_____

How do school administration, teachers and students relate in the school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you assess the leadership style of the Head teacher in the school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. What is the impact of the school leadership style on your performance?

_____

_____

8. How are parents involved in school activities?

_____

_____

How do students relate in the school?

_____

_____

How does the relationship impact on students' performance in the school?

_____

_____

9. How secure are you in the school?

_____

_____

_____

10. Could you suggest some of the other factors that affect your learning and performance negatively or positively?

_____

_____

Thank you for your cooperation!!!!!!!

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PTA

Interview guide for Parents and Teachers Association (PTA).

Information provided will be used for academic purposes only. Any information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

RESEARCH TOPIC: INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL-CULTURE ON STUDENTS' LEARNING IN HIGH AND LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS.

Name of institution: _____

Sex: _____ Age: _____

Academic qualification: _____

Position experience: _____

Duration at the school: _____

1.What are some of school activities that you are engaged in at the school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. How often to you hold meetings with the school administration?

_____

_____

_____

3. How does the school perform at national examinations?

_____

_____

4. How do you compare the results with preceding years?

_____

_____

5. What do you think could be the reason for the trend of the results?

_____

_____

6. What effort have you made to improve or maintain the trend of results?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. How do stakeholders relate in the school?

_____

_____

_____

8a. Are there any complaints from students about leadership of the school?

_____

_____

_____

b. If any, what are these complaints?

_____

_____

_____c.

What have you done to address these complaints?

_____

_____

_____

9. What do you do on improvement of learning and students' performance in the school?

_____

_____

_____

10a. Are you engaged in the formulation of school rules and regulations?

_____

b. What are the common indiscipline issues in the school?

_____

_____

c. How do you resolve such indiscipline issues?

_____

_____

11a. Does the school performance reflect the school motto, vision and mission statement?

_____

b. Justify the answer in 11a.

_____

_____

_____

12a. How do you compare academic performance of the school with neighbouring schools?

_____

_____

_____

b. If different, what do you think attributes to this?

_____

_____

_____

13. Is there any general comment about students learning the school academic performance?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your cooperation!!!!

APPENDIX 5: CLASS OBSERVATION TOOL

ACTIVITY	COMMENT	INDICATOR
i. Content mastery		
ii. Schemes and records of work		
iii. Lesson plan		
iv. Teacher punctuality		
v. Class transition		
vi. Teaching strategies		
vii. Gender sensitivity		
viii. Exercises/ assignments		
ix. Inclusive learning		
x. Teaching and learning material		
xi. Class management		
xii. General remark		

Thank you for your cooperation!!!

APPENDIX 6: SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES AT HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Prefecture:

1. Head Boy/Head Girl

2. Librarian

3. Laboratory

4. Sports

5. Entertainment

6. Sanitation/Health

7. Furniture/Estates

Staff responsibilities:

1. Head Teacher

2. Deputy Head Teacher

3. Teacher Bursar

4. School Management Committee

5. Action Research Committee

6. Staff Upkeep Officers

7. Head Of Departments

8. Stores Keeper

9. Internal Procurement Committee (I.P.C)

10. Teacher Librarian

11. Open School Coordinators

12. Time Table Committee

13. Examination Officers

14. Examinations Registrar

15. Covid Committee

16. Form Teachers

17. School Security Officers

18. Social Welfare Committee

19. Guidance And Counselling

20. Entertainment Patrons

21. Estates (School Furniture)

22. Sports Patrons

23. School Health And Nutrition Officers (SHN)

24. Sanitation Committee

25. Study Circle Managers

26. Bursary Committee

27. Discipline Committee

28. Land And Housing Committee

29. Development Committee

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

   I.   Quiz Patrons

  II.   Home Economics Clubs

 III.   Debate Club

 IV.   Girl Guide

  V.   Seventh Day

 VI.   Wildlife

VII. Blood Transfusion

VIII. Aids Toto

IX. Muslims Community

X. CCAPSO

XI. Science Clubs

XII. Her Future Her Choice

XIII. Chess Club

APPENDIX 7: SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES AT LOW PERFOMING SCHOOLS

Prefecture:

1. Head Boy/Head Girl

2. Librarian

3. Sports

4. Entertainment

5. Sanitation/Health

6. Furniture/Estates

Staff responsibilities:

1. Head Teacher

2. Deputy Head Teacher

3. Teacher Bursar

4. Staff Upkeep Officers

5. Head of Departments

6. Stores Keeper

7. Internal Procurement Committee (I.P.C)

8. Teacher Librarian

9. Open School Coordinators

10. Time Table Committee

11. Examination Officers

12. Examinations Registrar

13. Covid Committee

14. Form Teachers

15. School Security Officers

16. Social Welfare Committee

17. Guidance And Counselling

18. Entertainment Patrons

19. Estates (School Furniture)

20. Sports Patrons

21. School Health And Nutrition Officers (SHN)

22. Sanitation Committee

23. Study Circle Managers

24. Bursary Committee

25. Discipline Committee

26. Land And Housing

27. Development Committee

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

i. Wildlife

ii. Blood Transfusion

iii. Aids Toto

DAY	FORM	PERIOD NUMBER										
		1	2	3	9:30	4	5	6	12:00	7	8	9
		7:30-8:10	8:10-8:50	8:50-9:30	10:00	10:00-10:40	10:40-11:20	11:20-12:00	13:00	13:30-14:10	14:10-14:50	14:50-15:30
MONDAY	F1A	ENG-42	ENG-42	CHI-12	T	SOC-41	HIS-15	FR/HOM/COM/BK/CLT		MAT-16	MAT-16	GEO-28
	F1B	MAT-16	MAT-16	SOC-41	E	ENG-42	ENG-42	FR/HOM/COM/BK/CLT		HIS-15	GEO-28	CHI-12
	F1C	HIS-15	CHI-12	GEO-28	A	MAT-16	MAT-16	FR/HOM/COM/BK/CLT		SOC-41	ENG-42	ENG-42
	F2A	PHY-47	PHY-47	MAT-46		CHEM-6	CHEM-6	CHICH-22	L	ENG-14/32	ENG-14/32	SOC-11
	F2B	MAT-46	ENG-14/32	ENG-14/32		SOC-11	PHY-47	PHY-47	U	CHICH-22	CHEM-6	CHEM-6
	F2C	CHEM-6	CHEM-6	SOC-11	B	ENG-14/32	ENG-14/32	MAT-46	N	PHY-47	PHY-47	CHICH-22
	F3A	PHY-7	PHY-7	CHICH-23	R	MAT-31	MAT-31	CHEM-37	C	ENG-27	ENG-27	BLOCK 2
	F3B	MAT-31	MAT-31	CHEM-37	E	CHICH-23	ENG-27	ENG-27	H	PHY-7	PHY-7	BLOCK 2
	F3C	CHICH-23	ENG-27	ENG-27	A	CHEM -37	PHY-7	PHY-7		MAT-31	MAT-31	BLOCK 2
	F4A	MAT-24	MAT -24	CHICH-23	K	ENG-20/36	ENG-20/36	BLOCK 1		PHY-19	BIO-43	BIO-43
	F4B	ENG-20/36	ENG-20/36	PHY-19		BIO-43	BIO-43	BLOCK 1		MAT-24	MAT -24	CHICH-23
	F4C	PHY-19	BIO-43	BIO-43		MAT-24	MAT -24	BLOCK 1		CHICH-23	ENG-20/36	ENG-20/36
TUESDAY	F1A	PHY-7	GEO-28	BIO-18		ENG-42	ENG-42	FR/HOM/COM/BK/CLT		CHE-47	MAT-16	AGRI-4
	F1B	MAT-16	BIO-18	PHY-7	T	GEO-28	AGRI-4	FR/HOM/COM/BK/CLT		ENG-42	ENG-42	CHE-47
	F1C	ENG-42	ENG-42	MAT-16	E	CHE-47	BIO-18	FR/HOM/COM/BK/CLT		PHY- 7	AGRI-4	GEO-28
	F2A	MAT-46	MAT-46	FR/HOM/COMP/BK/CLT	A	GEO-10	ENG-14/32	LSK-39	L	AGRI-45	CHICH-22	HST-48
	F2B	GEO-10	CHICH-22	FR/HOM/COMP/BK/CLT		AGRI-45/43	MAT-46	MAT-46	U	HIST-48	ENG-21	LSK-10
	F2C	ENG-14/32	L/SK- 39	FR/HOM/COMP/BK/CLT	B	CHICH-22	HIST-48	AGRI-45/43	N	GEO-25	MAT-46	MAT-46

Day	Class											
	F3A	MAT-31	BIO-43	LIFE	R	BLOCK 2	CHEM-37	CHEM-37	C	AGRI-45	CHICH-23	BLOCK 1
	F3B	CHEM-37	CHEM-37	BIO-43	E	BLOCK 2	AGRI-45	CHICH-23	H	MAT-31	LIFE	BLOCK 1
	F3C	BIO-40	MAT-31	CHICH-23	A	BLOCK 2	LIFE	AGRI-45		CHEM-37	CHEM-37	BLOCK 1
	F4A	BLOCK1	BLOCK1	BIO-43	K	AGRI-4/34	MAT-24	CHEM-5		BLOCK 2	BLOCK 2	CHICH-29
	F4B	BLOCK1	BLOCK1	MAT-24		BIO-43	CHEM-6	CHICH-23		BLOCK 2	BLOCK 2	AGRI-4/34
	F4C	BLOCK1	BLOCK1	CHICH-29		CHEM-5	AGRI-4/34	BIO-18		BLOCK 2	BLOCK 2	MAT-24
WEDNESDAY	F1A	HIST-15	PHY-7	PHY-7	T	AGRI-4	SOC-41	GEO-28		MAT-16	MAT-16	FR/HOM/COM/BK/CLT
	F1B	GEO-28	MAT-16	MAT-16	E	PHY-7	PHY-7	AGRI-4		HIST-15	SOC-41	FR/HOM/COM/BK/CLT
	F1C	AGRI-4	GEO-28	HIST-15	A	SOC-41	MAT-16	MAT-16		PHY-7	PHY-7	FR/HOM/COM/BK/CLT
	F2A	ENG-14/32	ENG-14/32	LSK-39		MAT-46	MAT-46	FR/HOM/COMP/BK/CLT		HIST-15	SOC-11	CHICH-22
	F2B	SOC-11	MAT-46	MAT-46		HIST-15	LSK-39	FR/HOM/COMP/BK/CLT	L	CHICH-22	ENG-14/32	ENG-14/32
	F2C	HIST-48	LSK-39	CHICH-22		ENG-14/32	ENG-14/32	FR/HOM/COMP/BK/CLT	U	SOC-11	MAT-46	MAT-46
	F3A	ENG-27	ENG-27	BLOCK 1	B	CHICH-23	AGRI-45	AGRI-45	N	LIB	MAT-31	MAT-31
	F3B	AGRI-45	AGRI-45	BLOCK 1	R	MAT-31	MAT-31	CHICH-29	C	ENG-27	ENG-27	LIB
	F3C	MAT-31	MAT-31	BLOCK 1	E	LIB	CHEM-5	CHEM-5	H	CHICH-29	AGRI-4/34	AGRI-4/34
	F4A	ENG-20/36	PHY-19	CHICH-23	A	BLOCK 2	AGRI-4/34	AGRI-4/34		MAT-24	MAT-24	BLOCK 1
	F4B	AGRI-4/34	AGRI-4/34	ENG-20/36	K	BLOCK 2	MAT-24	MAT-24		CHICH-23	PHY-19	BLOCK 1
	F4C	MAT-24	MAT-24	PHY-19		BLOCK 2	ENG-20/36	CHICH-23		AGRI-4	AGRI-4	BLOCK 1
THURSDAY	F1A	CHEM-47	CHICH-12	CHICH-12		BIO-18	BIO-18	GEO-28		ENG-32	ENG-32	LSK-28
	F1B	LSK-28	ENG-32	ENG-32		GEO-28	CHICH-12	CHICH-12		CHEM-47	BIO-18	BIO-18
	F1C	BIO-18	BIO-18	GEO-28		CHEM-47	ENG-32	ENG-32		LSK-28	CHICH-12	CHICH-12
	F2A	MAT-46	MAT-46	BIO-37	B	AGRI-45	CHICH-22	CHICH-22		HIST-48	PHY-47	FR/HOM/COMP/BK/CLT
	F2B	HIST-48	BIO-37	AGRI-45/43	R	MAT-46	MAT-46	PHY-47	L	CHICH-22	CHICH-22	FR/HOM/COMP/BK/CLT
	F2C	CHICH-22	CHICH-22	PHY-47	E	BIO-37	HIST-48	AGRI-45	U	MAT-46	MAT-46	FR/HOM/COMP/BK/CLT
	F3A	ENG-27	BLOCK1	BLOCK 1	A	BIO-40	BLOCK 2	BLOCK 2	N	CHE-37	PHY-19	LIFE

	F3B	PHY-7	BLOCK1	BLOCK 1	K	ENG-27	BLOCK 2	BLOCK 2	C	LIFE	CHE-37	BIO-40
	F3C	BIO-40	BLOCK1	BLOCK 1		PHY-7	BLOCK 2	BLOCK 2	H	ENG	LIFE	CHE-37
	F4A	CHEM-5	CHICH-29	CHICH-29		MAT-24	MAT-24	AGRI-4/34		ENG-20/36	ENG-20/36	BIO-43
	F4B	BIO-43	MAT-24	MAT-24		ENG-20/36	ENG-20/36	CHEM-5		CHICH-29	CHICH-29	AGRI-4/34
	F4C	ENG-20/36	ENG-20/36	AGRI-4/34		BIO-43	CHICH-29	CHICH-29		CHEM-5	MAT-24	MAT-24
FRIDAY	F1A	CHEM--47	HIS-15	MAT-16	T	LSK-28	CHI-12	CHI- 12		AGRI-45	ENG-42	SOC-41
	F1B	AGRI-4	CHEM-47	ENG-42	E	SOC-41	HIST-15	LSK-28		MAT-16	CHI-12	CHI-12
	F1C	HIST-15	CHI-12	LIBRARY	A	AGRI-43	CHICH-12	ENG-43		SOC-41	CHEM-47	LIFE-28
	F2A	GEO-10	GEO-10	AGRI-45/43		ENG-14/32	ENG-14/32	CHEM-6	L	SOC-11	BIO-37	BIO-37
	F2B	CHEM-6	ENG-14/32	ENG-14/32	B	BIO-37	BIO-37	SOC-11	U	AGRI-45/43	GEO-10	GEO-10
	F2C	BIO-37	BIO-37	CHEM-6	R	SOC-11	GEO-10	GEO-10	N	ENG-14/32	ENG-14/32	AGRI-45/43
	F3A	ENG-27	ENG-27	AGRI-45	E	LIBRARY	BIO-40	BIO-40	C	PHY-7	CHICH-29	CHICH-29
	F3B	CHICH-23	CHICH-23	LIBRARY	A	ENG-27	ENG-27	AGRI-45	H	BIO-40	BIO-40	PHY-7
	F3C	BIO-40	BIO-40	PHY-7	K	CHICH-23	CHICH-23	LIBRARY		ENG-27	ENG-27	AGR-45
	F4A	CHEM-5	CHEM-5	BLOCK 2		LIBRARY	ENG-20/36	ENG-20/36		LIFE	PHY-19	PHY-19
	F4B	ENG-20/36	ENG-20/36	BLOCK 2		LIFE	PHY-19	PHY-19		CHEM-5	CHEM-5	LIBRARY
	F4C	PHY-19	PHY-19	BLOCK 2		P/E	CHEM-5	CHEM-5		ENG-20/36	ENG-20/36	LIFE+B6:N69

APPENDIX 9: TIME TABLE FOR ONE OF THE LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

TIME	7:30–8:05	8:05–8:40	8:40–9:15	9:15–9:50	9:50–10:25	10:25–10:55	10:55–11:30	11:30–12:05	12:05–12:40	12:40–1:15	1:15–1:50	1:50–2:20	2:20–4:00	
PERIOD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1 0	1 1			
MON														
1	ASSEMB	MAT/8	MAT/8	L/S/1 4	GEO/1 2	P/E	B	ENG/8	ENG/8	CHEM/1	CHEM/1	CHI/7	L	STUDY CIRCLE
2	ENG/3	ENG/3	MAT/4	MAT/4	P/E	L/S/6	BK/5	HIS/1 2	AGRI/8	AGRI/8				
3	MAT/13	MAT/13	GEO/6	CHI/3	CHI/3	SOD/1 4	ENG/1	ENG/1	AGRI/4	AGRI/4				
4	ENG/1	ENG/1	SOD/9	MAT/1 3	MAT/1 3	AGRI/4	AGRI/4	PHY/##	LS/9	LS/9				
TUE														
1	STUDY	BIO/1 4	BIO/1 4	PREP	GEO/1 2	BK/5	R	H IS/10	L /S/14	P HY/11	P HY/11	S OC/14	U	
2	ENG/3	ENG/3	BK/5	CHI/1 5	CHI/1 5	MAT/4	MAT/4	HIS/12	BIO/10	BIO/10				STUDY CIRCLE
3	BIO/2	BIO/2	HIS/1 0	MAT/1 3	SOD/1 4	BK/5	PHY/##	PHY/##	CHEM/13	ENG/1				
4	MAT/13	MAT/13	BIO/1 1	BIO/1 1	HIS/1	CHI/1 5	GEO/2	GEO/2	PHY/##	PHY/##				
WED														
1	STUDY	MAT/8	MAT/8	SOC/1 4	BK/5	P/E	E	ENG/8	ENG/8	BIO/1 4	CHI/7	CHI/7	N	
2	ENG/3	SOS/6	HIS/1 2	GEO/9	PREP	PHY/1 1	CHEM/@	CHI/1 5	L/S/6	BK/5				
3	ENG/1	ENG/1	CHI/3	CHI/3	SOD/1 4	HIS/1 0	GEO/6	BK/5	PHY/##	PHY/##				STUDY CIRCLE
4	ENG/7	ENG/7	CHI/1 5	CHI/1 5	HIS/1	SOD/9	PHY/##	PHY/##	CHEM/@	CHEM/@				
THUR														S
1	STUDY	MAT/8	CHI/7	CHI/7	HIS/1 0	PREP	A	E NG/8	E NG/8	G EO/12	A G RI/9	BK/5	C	P
2	ENG/3	ENG/3	MAT/4	MAT/4	L/S/6	GEO/9	CHI/15	CHI/15	CHEM/	CHEM/				O
3	ENG/1	ENG/1	GEO/6	CHEM/13	CHEM/13	HIS/1 0	MAT/1 3	MAT/1 3	BK/5	CHI/3				R
4	MAT/13	MAT/13	SOD/9	CHI/1 5	CHI/1 5	ENG/7	CHEM/	CHEM/	HIS/1	HIS/1				T
FRID														
1	STUDY	MAT/8	MAT/8	CHEM/1 4	AGRI/9	AGRI/9	K	PHY/1 1	SOC/1 4	ENG/8	HIS/1 0	L/S/1 4	H	
2	BIO/1 0	GEO/9	MAT/4	SOS/6	P/E	AGRI/8	PREP	SOS/6	PHY/1 1	PHY/1 1				
3	MAT/13	MAT/13	BIO/2	BIO/2	SOD/1 4	GEO/6	HIS/1 0	CHE4M/13	AGRI/4	AGRI/4				
4	ENG/7	ENG/7	BIO/1 1	BIO/1 1	MAT/1 3	AGRI/4	AGRI/4	SOD/9	GEO/2	GEO/2				STUDY CIRCLE

APPENDIX 10: LIBRARY AT A LOW PERFORMING SCHOOL

APPENDIX 11: STUDY CIRCLES AT A HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL

APPENDIX 12: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM MZUZU UNIVERSITY

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

Department of Teaching, Learning and
Curriculum Studies

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
L u w i n g a
M z u z u   2
M A L A W I

Tel: (265) 01 320 575/722
Fax: (265) 01 320 568
mdolo.mm@mzuni.ac.mw

26th JULY 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR BAMBIRO KUMWENDA

Mr Bambiro Kumwenda is a registered Master of Education (Leadership
and Management) Program student at Mzuzu University. He has been
cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)
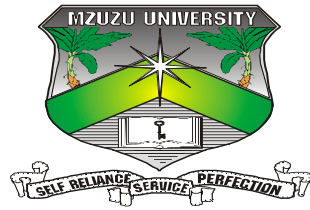to collect data for the research study he is conducting as a requirement
for the program.

Kindly assist him accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Margaret M. Mdolo
Program Coordinator

APPENDIX 13: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)

Informed Consent Form for Research in Master of Education (Leadership and Management)

Introduction

I am from **Mzuzu University.** I am doing research on: Influence of school-culture on students' learning in high and low performing schools in Malawi. This consent form may contain words which you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them to me or to another researcher.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of school-culture on students' academic performance in schools a case study in Central West Education Division (CWED) in Malawi and recommend good culture practices in all schools that promote academic performance.

Type of Research Intervention

The research will involve your participation in either responding to questionnaires or individual interview questions and focus group discussion.

Participation Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are the rightful person to provide most relevant information pertaining to the topic of study as you are in the field of study. Your input will contribute significantly to the success of this research and adoption of good culture practices in schools.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate, nothing will change. You may skip any question and move on to the next question.

Duration

The research will take place for a period of 6 months.

Risks

You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview or respond to questionnaires if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided with any incentive to take part in this research.

Sharing The Results

The knowledge we will obtain in this research will be shared to you and your community before it is widely made available to the public. The results will thereafter be published so that interested people may learn from the research.

Whom to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact:

1. (Researcher), Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2.

   Mobile:

   Email:

2. **Dr Margaret Mdolo** (Masters of Education Programme and Research Coordinator and

   Lecturer:Department of Education and Teaching Studies), Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2.

Mobile: +265993801059

Email:margaretmdolo@gmail.com

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) a committee whose task is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. Should you want to find more about the committee, do not hesitate to contact **Mr Gift Mbwele,** Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) Administrator, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2. **Phone** 0999404008/**0888641486**

Do you have any question?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in the research titled: Influence of school-culture on students' learning in high and low performing schools in Malawi. I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked, have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____
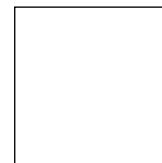
Date: _____

        Day/ Month/ Year

If illiterate

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Name of Witness _____ Thump Print of Participant

Witness' Signature _____

Date _____

      Day/Month/Year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the research project. I confirm the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of researcher/person taking consent:

Date _____

      Day/ Month/ Year

APPENDIX 14: A LETTER FROM CENTRAL WEST EDUCATION DIVISION

Ref: CWED/ACAD/RESEARCH/22   **4th AUGUST 2022**

FROM: THE EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER, CENTRAL WEST
        EDUCATION DIVISION, PO BOX 98, LILONGWE.

TO   The Headmistress, Lilongwe Girls Secondary School
        The Headteacher, Chilambula CDSS
        The Headteacher, Kasiya Secondary School
        The Headteacher, Likuni Boys Secondary School
        The Headteacher, Ngowe Community Secondary School
        The Headteacher, SOS Secondary School
        The Headteacher, Youth Care Pvt. Secondary School
        The Headteacher, St. Johns Secondary School

**Re: PERMISSION TO COLLECT ACADEMIC RESEARCH DATA FROM
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL WEST EDUCATION DIVISION.**

I write to introduce to you **Mr. Bambiro Hadley Kumwenda**, a student at Mzuzu University in his final year of study towards a Masters in Leadership Management.

Mr. Kumwenda has been granted permission to collect data for his study at your school.

His area of study is: *Influence of School-Culture on Students' learning in high and low performing schools in Malawi: A Case Study of Managers' Perspectives in Central West Education Division.*

Your school has been sampled for the purpose of data collection from respondents to be selected by the researcher.

However, the researcher will have to seek individual consent from the participants and that normal classes shall not be disrupted.

You are therefore requested to render to the researcher all the assistance required.

J.J. Nkhata

EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER

0 5 AUG 2022
DOSS
P.O. BOX 98, LILONGWE.

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