

**Implementation of Leadership Standards in Advancing School Governance in  
Malawian Schools: A Case of selected ISEM Schools in Central West Education  
Division**

By

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's Degree in Education Leadership and Management at Mzuzu University. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination to any University or College before.

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Signature:

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> April 202

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Date: 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

## **DEDICATION**

To my parents for instilling in me the belief that everything is possible regardless of the situation.

To my children: Uchindami, Uchizi and Vinjeru for persevering in the absence of motherly love and care during the one year I was doing my classwork away from them.

To my brothers, sisters and in-laws: for their unwavering support and encouragement.

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## ABSTRACT

Good school governance increases participation, accountability and transparency in a school (Supriadi, 2021). To guide school leaders towards improved school governance, National Education Standards (NES), including those on leadership, were put in place in Malawi. However, the implementation of the standards in relation to school governance has not been documented. This study was conducted to examine the implementation of leadership standards in advancing school governance in Malawi's secondary schools, specifically, the Central West Education Division (CWED). A mixed method approach was used to enhance in-depth enquiry through qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The sample comprised 7 head teachers; 7 deputy head teachers; 21 heads of department, 106 prefects, and 21 SGBs who were purposively selected. Schools were randomly selected from all schools under the ISEM project in CWED. Closed-ended questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from all respondents, while an interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from selected School Governing Bodies (SGBs) representatives. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS to find frequencies and relationships, whereas qualitative data was analysed using thematic approach and general inference. The findings of this study revealed that: SGBs in CWED understand leadership standards 17, 18 and 24, but they cannot relate aspects to particular NES; SGBs in CWED are greatly involved in the implementation of leadership standards 17, 18 and 24 and that decentralisation in the secondary education sector is a factor to the implementation of NES. These study's findings can inform policymakers on the implementation of leadership standards for further action; that educational policies and NES be put in native languages to help SGBs fully understand; that SGBs be periodically trained to achieve in-depth understanding and that secondary education be fully decentralised while gradually providing adequate support, resources and training to the local leadership to equip them for the new areas of responsibility.

## **KEY WORDS**

Governance, School Governance, Leadership, Education standards, Leadership standards

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>BoG</b>	Board of Governors
<b>CWED</b>	Central West Education Division
<b>DIAS</b>	Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services
<b>DQUAS</b>	Directorate of Quality Assurance
<b>MGDS III</b>	Malawi Growth Development Strategy III
<b>MOEST</b>	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
<b>NEP</b>	National Education Policy
<b>NES</b>	National Education Standards
<b>NESIP</b>	National Education Sector Investment Plan
<b>ISEM</b>	Improving Secondary Education in Malawi
<b>PTA</b>	Parent Teachers Association
<b>SGB</b>	School Governing Boards
<b>SMC</b>	School Management Committee
<b>SASA</b>	South African Schools Act
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter presents the introduction to the study, the background to the study, the statement of the problem, research objectives, research significance, research justification, theoretical framework and operational definitions of the study. At the end, there is a summary of the whole chapter.

### **1.2 Orientation of the Study**

School governance has gained relevance in many countries recently, as a necessary element in responding to challenges associated with educational quality and equity (Balu et al., 2009; Wilkins, 2015). Burns and Koster (2016) observe that governing education systems has become more challenging lately, due to highly educated parents, diverse societies and societal demand that schools cater for students' individual needs. It is argued that improving the quality of teaching and learning depends on the quality of leadership (Supriadi et al., 2021). In addition, it is contended that for school governance to produce student achievement, it requires proper implementation of rigorous academic standards, aligned curriculum, accountability measures and teacher practice (Pak et al., 2020). Faced with this situation, most education systems have evolved towards more systemic and global perspectives in defining the nature of governance and leadership within schools (Pont, 2020). Most countries, including Malawi, introduced National Education Standards (NES) to guide school leaders in improving school performance. However, Thematic Review (2018) argues that despite school governance interventions resulting in statistically significant improvements in student outcomes such as attendance and learning, emerging evidence indicates that not all projects are witnessing positive impacts yet. For instance, proponents of Standard-Based Reforms



(SBR) have expressed rising dissatisfaction regarding the quality of standards implementation (Clune, 2001; Ogawa et al., 2003). This study, therefore, sought to examine how the implementation of education standards especially, those on leadership, is advancing school governance in the Malawian secondary schools.

### **1.3 Background**

Major trends in educational governance have shaped educational leadership over time. Burns (2015) notes that effective governance, works through building capacity, open dialogue and stakeholder involvement. As such, governance models have shifted from industrial to decentralisation ([https://dsert.kar.nic.in.nep.20\\_school\\_Governnce\\_and\\_Leadership1.pdf](https://dsert.kar.nic.in.nep.20_school_Governnce_and_Leadership1.pdf)). However, poor school governance has become a worldwide challenge, recently. For example, the governing bodies of publicly funded schools in England are currently facing several substantive challenges of various kinds (James et al., 2013). In South Africa, School governance is the single most important factor in education that seems to experience insurmountable challenges. According to the ESSA project report (2018), Malawi secondary schools have problems such that there is a need to ensure that all secondary schools in Malawi meet minimum standards of practice considered appropriate so that they can maximise learning outcomes for all. According to the report, there is also a need to improve the quality and availability of data from secondary schools to monitor capacity and quality as well as to ensure that new investment in secondary education is based on verifiable performance indicators in Malawi (EESSA, 2018).

Since the 1980s, emphasis has been placed on giving local stakeholders increased influence as well as control over the education system, and an increased push for greater school autonomy over decision-making and school choice in policy debates (OECD, 2022). This has led to an alignment of efforts between various levels of the system and stakeholders who influence education policy and delivery of services to help countries achieve their educational goals (OECD, 2022). As such, school governance involves the participation of higher levels of authority down to the community level with various actors and stakeholders holding varying degrees of power, authority, influence and accountability (Baghdady & Zaki, 2019). However, the distribution of responsibilities among different levels of the education system (central or national, regional, sub-regional, local or municipal, and non-school level) varies across countries (OECD, 2022). In general, decisions concerning overall planning and structure are made at the central level, decisions about the organisation and delivery of instruction are mostly made at school level and decisions related to personnel management are mostly made at school or local level (OECD, 2022).

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

With a renewed focus on performance standards, there is increased attention on cooperate governance, decentralised governance and setting benchmarks for performance management. The National Education Standards (Primary and Secondary) and standards for Teacher Education provide an opportunity for education institutions to evaluate their performance in various areas of governance. Unfortunately, several scholars, who have written on school governance both internationally and nationally, agree that school governance is challenged.

Internationally, it has been revealed that school governance is facing challenges related to involvement of the community in schools such as attendance of SMC meetings, lack of coordination between teachers and parents, cultural barriers, corruption, political pressure, lack of communication SMCSs' lack of: awareness about their duties, participation in school planning, training on the role of PTA and awareness of financial grants (Patel, 2021).

Nationally, Kayira (2008) argues that there are school governance problems in Malawi's education system. The challenges of performance and implementation were earlier identified by the Ministry of Education in a study meant to evaluate the Performance Management System (PMS) in 2008 (Kalowafumbi, 2013). Among others, identified implementation problems included: lack of leadership and management commitment, lack of knowledge and skills about the processes and procedures, weak monitoring and evaluation system, lack of communication on organisational strategies, absence of performance standards, inadequate financial resources, attitude problem and social culture, rigid political will and also the nature of the civil service (Kalowafumbi, 2013).

To improve school governance and to ensure that there is effective teaching, learner safety and care in the schools, the Ministry of Education developed leadership standards to act as yardsticks for school leaders (MOEST, 2015). The expectation was that school leaders place emphasis on the nature and quality of their work in line with national leadership standards as well as strengthen PTAs and management boards if they are to be efficient (NES, 2015). However, way after the introduction of NES, Malawi's school leadership is still struggling with personal, professional and community challenges that hinder the implementation of projects and innovations in schools (Galafa, 2018). Apart from the studies, problematic

school governance and management have also been identified as a priority for improvement by the Malawi Education Sector Analysis (2019a). Mzembe (2017) observes that poor cooperation and lack of transparency and accountability among the school heads of staff and Area Development Committees are some of the major causes of challenges facing the schools. The problems range from school leaders' incompetence emanating from poor or lack of training (Lucas & Galafa, 2018), lack of collaboration due to conflicting views (Lucas & Galafa, 2018; Msiska, 2022), incomplete as well as unclear education decentralisation (Kufaine & Mtapuri, 2014). In the secondary subsector, the challenges include limited school governance and accountability, inadequate district-level capacity to monitor schools, low-quality school leadership and management, limited school-level inspection, inefficiency, ineffectiveness and lack of supervision and advisory support due to lack of decentralisation of functions (NESIP,2008-2017; EESSA project report, 2018). The Malawi Capacity Development Strategy and plan for 2013-2017 indicates that there remains a great deal to be accomplished in the overall management and governance of the education system (MOEST, 2019a).

One mechanism for examining consensus around the necessity of practice by school leaders is the examination of the formalised bodies or sets of standards (Clayton, 2014). If school leadership is not aligned with national standards, chaos reigns as most school undertakings solely rest on the head teacher's experience and personality (The Wallace Foundation, 2018). As such the 2020-2030 secondary school education is obliged to focus on improving governance and management, by strengthening leadership capacities (NESIP, 2020). As such, the EESSA project report (2018), recommends enforcement of minimum standards of practice considered appropriate to maximise learning outcomes for all in all Malawian

secondary schools. The report indicates that there is a need for a robust inspection and advisory system in place to ensure that all secondary schools in Malawi meet the minimum standards of practice considered appropriate, but also that they can maximise learning outcomes for all. The report also recommends improving the quality and availability of data from secondary schools for use in monitoring capacity and quality, so that new investment in secondary education is based on verifiable performance indicators (EESSA, 2018).

Despite education departments' consciousness of the need to maintain equal standards, there are difficulties in implementing them when decentralisation is devolved to the school level (Kufaine & Mtapuri, 2014). Even though schools have community groups such as SMCs, P.T.A., Mother Groups and Community Volunteers which are meant to play a role in the implementation of leadership standards, most of these are inactive (MOEST, 2022). The result of shortcomings that largely arise from institutional and governance problems in the delivery of quality services in the Malawian education subsector is low rates of school completion and deteriorating exam results (O'Neil et al., 2014). About 22 percent of schools (19 out of 88) are further away from the efficiency frontier where learning output measure is purely based on pass rates (O'Neil et al., 2014). Worse still, the implementation of initiatives to achieve national education standards is mostly met with massive challenges due to a lack of collaboration between head teachers and relevant stakeholders in Malawi (Galafa, 2018). OECD (2013) observes that the challenge in standards-based reforms is 'implementation' regarding changes and interruptions in the processes of implementation, the lack of clearly delineated institutional responsibilities, unintended learning outcomes, un conducive conditions for changes and active or passive resistance of teachers. In the Malawian case, the

problem is how to get all school managers to be committed to practice concerning performance against leadership standards 17, 18, 19 and 24.

However, in reality, none of the authors whose literature was reviewed have explored the impact that enforced leadership standards may have in improving school governance. In terms of methodology, the reviewed literature used qualitative research which relies on inference of conclusions from data (Wilkins & Gobby, 2015; Ainley & Mackenzie, 2000). This way, the reviewed studies could not produce evidence-based findings. Therefore, this study aimed to use mixed methodology to get trusted findings. Though the researchers did not specify, most of them recommended more research to be done in the area of school governance (Kufaine & Mtapuri, 2014; Lucas & Galafa, 2018). As such, there is a need for a better understanding of how the implementation of leadership standards number 17, 18, and 24 is advancing school governance in Malawian secondary schools. This study, therefore, purported to examine how the implementation of leadership standards 17, 18, and 24 are guiding tools for advancing school governance in Malawian secondary schools in general, and Central West Education Division (CWED), in particular.

## **1.5 Main Concepts of the Study**

### ***1.5.1 Definition of School Governance***

School governance is defined as the autonomy of schools in managing their schools' human, financial, and material resources (De Grauwe, 2005). School governance is differently defined by Aldallal (2016) as what school leaders and governing bodies do within the context of laws, regulations, administrative instructions and directives originating from the

government as they represent people, and assume the original authority to determine the type of education a country should provide for its citizens. Apart from that, school governance is defined as how school governing bodies lead, direct and manage the school (USAID, 2016). However, nowadays, democracy demands that school governance be based on human rights values, empowerment and involvement of students, staff and community stakeholders in a school's decision-making (Backman & Trafford, 2007). The Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training (NESSE, 2018) links school governance to how funding, provision, goal ownership, and regulation of the education and training system is coordinated, and at what level; local, regional, national and supranational. It is also identified with effectiveness, level of participation and the integrity with which key functions are performed (NESSE, 2018). As such, school governance encompasses vision, strategy, accountability, trust, capacity and stakeholder relationships (Leechman et al., 2019). Risteska et al. (2010) also concur that good school governance possesses traits of responsiveness, accountability, transparency, and engagement in designing as well as implementing policies. In line with this, school governance is defined as a set of responsibilities and procedures exercised by an institution or government to provide strategic direction to ensure that educational objectives are achieved through effective and efficient use of resources, accountability, and participation of people in decision-making (Kadir, 2019).

Considering that the study concerns ISEM schools and to incorporate the various democratic aspects this study adopts the definition championed by ISEM. In this sense, school governance is defined as enabling all access to information, holding secondary school leaders, teachers, parents and students to account, and triggering positive changes in their school and community (MOEST, 2020).

### ***1.5.2 ISEM***

Improving Secondary School Education in Malawi (ISEM) is a programme under the Education sector financed by the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) to Malawi (<https://www.naosupportmw.org>>is...). Its overall development objective is to contribute to strengthening the capacity of the Malawian education sector to satisfy the needs of the economy for educated youth through expanding and improving equitable access to inclusive quality education. Specifically, its objectives are to improve the management and governance of secondary schools, quality and relevance as well as education access. (<https://www.eeas.europa.eu>>improv...). The project aims at supporting access, quality, management and governance of secondary education service delivery mainly, by improving the leadership skills of education managers, professionalism in secondary education service provision as well as management, accountability and quality of service provision. As such, sampling schools under the ISEM project served to make a better assessment of the objectives of the topic under study. Currently, it operates in 25 schools located in Dedza, Mangochi, Mulanje, Mzimba North, Nsanje, Rumphi, Salima and Zomba districts (<https://www.eeas.europa.eu>>improv...). In Central West Education Division, ISEM operates in all schools in Lilongwe Rural East.

### ***1.5.3 Importance of School Governance***

School governance is an important mechanism for tackling, making and implementing decisions in a transparent, accountable and responsive manner (ISEM Facilitation, 2019). It is also closely related to leadership which is a major ingredient for education effectiveness and improvement because leaders are central to the decision-making process and are key players in such transformation initiatives (Kufaine & Mtapuri, 2014). Apart from mediating national



policy to schools, leadership also sets and communicates visions for education in the district as well as building capacity in schools (Kufaine & Mtapuri, 2014). It is argued that with proper school governance, access to all information is enabled, and school leaders, teachers, parents and students are held accountable for triggering positive changes in their school and community (MOEST, 2019b).

#### ***1.5.4 Barriers to Good School Governance***

School governance has faced barriers such as lack of parents' interest, lack of awareness among parents, poor communication, lack of support from boards of management, lack of training among stakeholders and poor class management featured highly in some schools in countries where national education standards are operational (Kandie, 2017). This has made educational service beneficiaries demand quality and accountability from their education providers. Most of the numerous challenges arise within the management and administration system of the schools (Lucas & Galafa, 2018). This has made issues of transparency; evaluation and accountability to become important learning strategies for continuous improvement and opportunities for promoting reflection in the educational community (Pont, 2020).

#### ***1.5.5 Introduction of Quality Assurance Mechanisms***

The introduction of quality assurance mechanisms has become a priority for several education systems (Education Outlook, 2019). Countries employ a range of strategies of varying degrees to monitor students' learning goals and assess the impact of education policies as well as schools' compliance with laws and regulations (OECD, 2022). The

strategies address the need to define basic standards for student learning or professional standards for teachers, school leaders and school providers, or establish a dedicated agency to monitor and ensure that quality standards are met (OECD, 2013). 'Standards' are definitions of what someone should know and be able to do to be considered competent in a particular (professional or educational) domain (OECD, 2013). Standards define the dimensions of performance or the domains of learning that are valued and that are worthy of being promoted, but they can also be used to assess if what is valued is being achieved or not. As such, they can be used as a tool for decision-making, indicating the distance between actual performance and the minimum level of performance required to be considered competent. The use of education standards gained popularity between 2008 and 2019 in countries like Australia, Kazakhstan, Norway, Korea, New Zealand, Portugal, Columbia, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic the United Kingdom and Malawi (OECD, 2013).

#### ***1.5.6 Education Governance in Malawi***

In Malawi, secondary schools have been largely governed by an education central office which has six education divisional offices that are responsible for secondary education (Kufaine & Mtapuri, 2014). In this hierarchical structure, all secondary schools report to education division managers who also report to the Ministry of Education headquarters (Sineta, 2002). As such, the centre continues to play a significant role both in setting policies and in carrying out routine functions which would otherwise be done by local authorities (Kafumbu, 2017). The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) is not only responsible for addressing these key issues, but it is also charged with implementing policies required for the delivery of a sustainable and functioning school system throughout all stages of the education cycle. Though recent steps have been made to decentralise the education

sector, Malawi still operates a highly consolidated system, with MoEST responsible for standards implementation and supervision, among others (Local Governance Performance Index on Malawi's Education, 2016).

Over the years, good governance and management have been recurrent problems affecting the Malawian education system. Good governance was identified as one of the core challenges in a case report on democracy support through the United Nations aimed at evaluating a response project to 'The Malawi Vision 2020' (Moberg et al., 2010). Later, Malawi Education Sector Analysis, (2019) singled out issues of governance to be among the key factors affecting the secondary school sub-sector in Malawi, such that there is inadequate management and leadership to articulate the mission of an organisational unit (school) and also, direct detailed attention to implementing the unit's goals and objectives. The objective of promoting accountability and good governance in education has, however, been poorly executed to some extent (Kafumbu, 2017). Kufaine (2008) observes that there appears to be no specific mechanism for evaluating the district's performance and for making it accountable for what it achieves. Similarly, Ng'ambi (2010) observes that the decentralisation of education policy has faced a lot of obstacles in its implementation stage.

Despite the intents of the Decentralisation Policy and Act, devolution in Malawi has been slow and partial, with a dual system of devolution and de-concentration still operating at the district level (MOEST, 2019a). As a result, the decentralisation of education in Malawi has to a great extent been unable to meet its objectives due to the reluctance of the central ministry to cede more decision-making power to the local level, and due to insufficient human

resources (Kafumbu, 2017). Though expenditure responsibilities have been formally articulated in the policy and legal framework of local government, the actual decentralisation of functions and expenditure responsibilities from the central ministries has been dragging on (Chiweza, 2016). As such, it becomes very difficult to achieve the goal of improvement of the education system through increased efficiency in the allocation and utilisation of resources (Kafumbu, 2017).

Contrary to one of the aims of decentralisation which is to create democratic environments and institutions, communities in Malawi have to an extent been marginalised (Kafumbu, 2017). Anderson (2003) argues that accountability during reforms like decentralisation is not just meant to gather information on district performance for planning, but also to hold officials at all levels accountable for progress toward the state goals, aligned with standards. However, in Malawi, officials who make decisions at the local level cannot be held fully accountable for issues such as poor quality of education. According to Patel (2011), the decentralisation process in Malawi, has not facilitated community empowerment, but has impeded the process through a flawed decentralisation process which has failed to facilitate effective local governance. The only form of participation communities are engaged in is in capital development for schools and do not participate in administrative issues as they continue looking up to central authorities as the ones capable of making the right decisions for them (Jagero et al., 2014)

### *1.5.7 National Education Standards in Malawi*

National Education Standards (NES) are defined as expected outcomes that key stakeholders such as parents, students and carers, expect from all education providers in public and private institutions through proper leadership, management and teaching processes which are essential to the achievement of those outcomes (MOEST, 2016)). The introduction of NES came after it was revealed that performance standards were absent, lack of leadership and management commitment, weak Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) system, lack of communication on organisational strategies, inadequate financial resources, attitude and social culture problems, political will not bending on performance, inadequate consultation, lack of linkage between rewards and performance and nature of the civil service (Kalowafumbi, 2013). As such, twenty-six NES were developed and introduced in 2015 as an essential foundation for improving performance after the Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS, now called Directorate of Quality Assurance- DQUAS) unveiled massive school leadership problems (NES, 2015). The NES were also derived from good practice set by section 25 of the constitution of the Republic of Malawi, which stipulates that every person is entitled to education and that the schools or institutions offering education should be maintained according to official standards (Constitution of Malawi, 1994 -amended through 2017). The Education Act Section 4 (c), directs the use of education standards in Malawi by stipulating that it shall be the duty of the Minister to set and maintain national education standards (GoM, 2013). The aim was to maximise educational outcomes, to get quality feedback on what is happening in schools and to effect decentralised school governance (MOEST, 2015). The NES comprise specified indicators of quality for educational institutions which provide feedback on the performance and functioning of the education system for necessary appropriate action (MOEST, 2015). As such, they serve to

establish benchmarks, objectives, targets, and goals in the development context (UNDP, 2015). In addition to stipulating minimum requirements expected of all schools, the standards specify targets for effective practice which are both challenging and achievable.

### ***1.5.8 Leadership and Management Standards***

In terms of school governance, there are twelve education standards which encompass key features of leadership and management. Out of the twelve, there is a component of education standards termed 'Leadership Standards' which focuses on the roles of school management committee, Board of Governors (BoGs), proprietors of private schools, the effectiveness of head teacher and senior staff in ensuring that students benefit from good teaching and are safe and well cared for in school (MOEST, 2015). These include NES 17 and 18. Leadership standards are often linked to management standards which focus on the practical action the school takes to ensure that all students have a positive school experience and that they are safe, happy and learning well (MOEST, 2015). Management standards are concerned with working with parents and the community, as well as managing and providing support to staff. They look at the extent to which the school community has a clear sense of direction and shares a common set of values (MOEST, 2015). In addition to that, they are concerned with the efficient and effective use of resources for the school to operate equitably and in the interest of all its beneficiaries (MOEST, 2015). The management standards include NES 24. As such, to assess how effective standards are in improving school governance, this study focused on the implementation of NES 17, 18, and 24. The standard's details can be analysed as follows:

### ***1.5.9 National Education Standard 17: School Governance***

According to MOEST (2015) the following are the minimum standards on school governance:

- a. Members of the SMC/governing body/P.T.A and/or proprietor are knowledgeable about national educational policies and take practical steps to implement them.
- b. Members of the SMC/governing body/PTA and/or proprietor are in partnership with school leaders and the local community.
- c. The SMC/governing body is actively involved in raising funds for the school.
- d. The SMC/governing body has received training and members have a good understanding of their responsibilities.
- e. The SMC/governing body meetings are well attended.
- f. The SMC/governing body meetings are well documented.
- g. The SMC/governing body plays an active role in budgeting for all school funds.
- h. The SMC/governing body ensures that all financial expenditure is properly accounted for and communicated to stakeholders.
- i. The SMC/governing body encourages parents and the community to be involved in the school, by organising activities and reporting on school events and achievements.
- j. The SMC/governing body plays an active role in school improvement planning.
- k. The school has a school management committee (SMC), Board of Governors or similar authority which has oversight of its policies and activities.
- l. The structure of the SMC/governing body conforms to statutory requirements.
- m. Members of the SMC/governing body are aware of their responsibilities.
- n. The school has functional committees, for example, the School Improvement Plan Committee and Internal Procurement Committee.

### ***1.5.10 National Education Standard 18: School Leadership***

According to MOEST (2015) the following are minimum standards on school leadership:

- a. The headteacher and senior staff demonstrate through their actions that they are accountable to the District/ SMC/governing body, parents, community and students for the quality of education in the school.
- b. The head teacher and senior staff work effectively with teachers and parents to improve the quality of the school.
- c. The headteacher and senior staff prioritise students' education, safety and care and ensure that these are as good as possible.
- d. The headteacher has put in place key policies to ensure the quality of education, care and protection and checks that staff is implementing them.
- e. The head teacher and staff have a clear understanding of what needs to improve.
- f. The headteacher has good working relationships with teachers and delegates effectively.
- g. The head teacher meets, communicates and consults with staff regularly, and has gained their support in making changes.
- h. Senior staff regularly monitors teachers' assessments to ensure that they use a range of methods, are accurate and that feedback to students is constructive.
- i. The headteacher is on the school premises for most of the working week.
- j. The head teacher and senior staff are respected by students, teachers, parents and the community.
- k. All records are kept on the premises during teaching hours and are accessible and up-to-date.



- l. Senior staff regularly monitors teachers' planning and curriculum coverage and provides oral and written advice as appropriate.
- m. Senior staff monitors teachers' attendance and punctuality and takes action as necessary.

#### ***1.5.11 National Education Standard 24: Management of Buildings and Facilities***

According to MOEST (2015) the following are minimum standards for management of buildings and facilities:

1. The school has implemented a Water Conservation Policy and its environment minimises runoff, wind erosion and deforestation.
2. The buildings and grounds are secure from intruders and are well cared for and maintained.
3. The head teacher's office, staffroom and library are well organised and used for their intended purposes.
4. Science laboratories meet national safety requirements and provide safe storage for chemicals and equipment.
5. The school has a garden which provides a context for developing farming skills and supplies produce which is used to raise funds and/ or improve students' nutrition.
6. All boarding hostels meet at least minimum requirements as set out in the legislation and regulations, including disability policies.
7. Classrooms have sufficient benches and desks for all students and a desk and chair for the teacher.
8. All rooms provide a clear passage for exit in case of emergency.
9. The school has sufficient, suitable quality accommodation for teachers.

10. The school meets minimum requirements as set out in building legislation.
11. Classrooms are of adequate size for the number of students and are clean, safe, well ventilated and well-lit.
12. Students and staff have access to an adequate and clean supply of water at all times.
13. Latrines are sufficient in number, ensure privacy, are clean and hygienic, and have hand-washing facilities.
14. Girls have access to a washroom.

For all three leadership standards, a school is rated to be below minimum standards if it does not meet requirements for what is set as minimum standards (MOEST, 2015). This implies that such a school does not follow the guiding leadership standards.

The introduction of NES in the Malawian education system includes decentralising school governance through the establishment of school governing boards in schools to enhance accountability processes through the involvement of teachers, community and students as stakeholders in school governance (MOEST, 2019a). The Malawi Education Act (2013) legally states that all secondary Schools must be governed by a Board of Governors (MOEST, 2020). In line with this, the Malawi government committed to strengthening school-level governance by driving reforms that will establish regulated Boards of Governors (BoGs) for secondary schools by 2025 (GoM, 2022).

### ***1.5.12 Boards of Governors (BoGs)***

MOEST (2020) defines BoG as a representative group of various school stakeholders that focus on overall school operations. In school governance, BoGs are considered one of the critical structures which aim to provide school stakeholders with an opportunity to align their collective activities, share their progress and improve the performance of their school towards the required standard. The establishment of BoG as an oversight body that should work closely with the school management committee shifts the role of the Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A) to solely classroom support as opposed to providing oversight as was the case previously (MOEST, 2019).

### ***1.5.13 Composition of BoGs***

The structure and composition of BoGs comprise 13 members of which 9 are voting members. Specifically, voting BoGs consist of 5 parents who currently have children at the school, 2 of whom must be of the same gender; 1 representative from the area Development Committee, 1 chief or chief's representative and 2 representatives from the surrounding community (1 male and 1 female). Non-voting members include the Headteacher and 1 teacher who represent teachers and other staff members, 1 PTA representative and 1 Mother Group representative. The members of the BoG form sub-committees responsible for Finance and planning, Infrastructure and Environment, Academics and Discipline, Health and Food as well as Guidance and Counseling. How regularly school governing bodies meet to plan for and implement their roles in the management entails stakeholders' level of involvement (MOEST, 2019).

#### ***1.5.14 Key Roles and Responsibilities of the BoG***

BoGs function to make short-term, long-term-term planning, implementation and monitoring of school activities. Key roles and responsibilities of BoGs include to implement the National Education Policy and exercise control, in accordance with the Act and any subsidiary legislation made under the Act, over secondary schools; monitor the management of school in the implementation of laws, policies and regulations; review and approve school rules and regulations; seek and receive funds for the school operation; allocate funds for different school programmes and activities; identify and provide funds for scholarships and bursaries for the maintenance and transport of students; receive and approve reports from the head teacher of the school; approve budgets and ensure accountability of funds; ensure that the school has appropriate buildings and infrastructure, and teaching and learning materials; take stock and monitor school assets; deal with teacher discipline matters and submit recommendations to appropriate commissions and bodies; determine disciplinary action on students in school; monitor teaching and learning in the schools as per approved curriculum, syllabuses, academic calendar and National Education Standards; approve secondary school development plans (SSIP) as well as seek and receive funds for the operation of the schools.

#### **1.6 Aim of the Study**

The study aimed to examine how the implementation of standards 17, 18 and 24 is advancing school governance in Malawian secondary schools in general, and Central West Education Division (CWED) in particular.

## **1.7 Objectives of the study**

The study specifically aimed to:

- i. Investigate how school governing bodies in CWED understand national education standards 17, 18 and 24, concerning school governance.
- ii. Evaluate the extent to which school governing bodies in CWED are involved in the implementation of education standards 17, 18, and 24.
- iii. Assess if decentralisation of the secondary education sector is a factor in the implementation of the education standards 17, 18 and 24.

## **1.8 Research Significance**

The study has the potential to benefit policymakers on the status of educational matters of importance such as school governance, specifically the implementation of leadership standards. It can also be a base for further decentralisation of secondary schools in Malawi in that it talks to national, and on a broader range, international frameworks for action. At the school level, the study is a wake-up call to different stakeholders in school management about their role in the management of their school to improve the school's standards. Overall, it can serve to strengthen the research base and improve practice by school governing bodies. Most of all, it is in line with Malawi's Vision 2063 in terms of raising the citizens' knowledge standards.

## **1.9 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

### ***1.9.1 Limitations***

Limited financial resources and time were some of the challenges encountered during the study. Another limitation was the involvement of school governing bodies as participants which posed a challenge in the organisation of participants due to distance from their residences to schools. As a result, some delays were encountered in the data collection process. The unavailability of some participants due to unforeseen circumstances; engagement in some other official activities as well as monetary expectations in exchange for the provision of data, were some of the challenges encountered. However, the limitations were all dealt with in various ways. The researcher used the most direct routes to research sites to save on transport costs. After encountering delays on the first day, participants in the following data collection sites would be informed in advance through phone calls to prevent delays. Expected time would be agreed in advance between the researcher and the individual participants to avoid delays. In case the researcher was delayed at one school, the next school would be informed of the delay through phone calls to the chairpersons of BoGs or P.T.A. In terms of monetary expectations by prospective participants, honest explanations about non-financial attachments to the data collection and voluntary consent, helped to get an understanding and willingness of participants.

### ***1.9.2 Delimitations***

The study only targeted schools under the 'Improving Secondary School Education in Malawi' (ISEM) project in the Central West Education Division (CWED) out of all education divisions which made the researcher financially spend within the proposed budget. It also

made it possible for the researcher to be at the data collection centres in time. Central West Education Division stands to be where the ISEM project was piloted to improve school governance in chosen secondary schools. This implies the existence of particular problems that were identified in the area in terms of school governance. As such, the study site was considered a readily available opportunity for essential data. In its attempt to improve secondary school education, the ISEM project is concerned with decentralised secondary school governance and the introduction of SGBs which the study was also involved with. Finally, the study involved participants such as head teachers, deputy head teachers and prefects who are mostly readily available at schools during school time.

### **1.10 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by Goal Theory, developed by Latham and Locke (1979). The theory was developed after finding gaps in its preceding psychological theories of motivation and was first published in 1990, after 400 studies. It was mainly concerned with achievement and motivation (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953). According to the theory, motivation and performance are higher when individuals set specific goals, when the goals are difficult but accepted, and when there is feedback on performance (Armstrong, 2009). The theory provides the rationale for performance management mainly, through the use of goals, feedback and motivation to implement the set goals. It involves not just striving to do something but doing it well (e.g., attaining a sales objective) to meet a standard of excellence (Latham & Locke, 2019). According to the theory, performance-oriented individuals are extremely conscious of others' perceptions of their ability level and are most often either concerned with demonstrating their ability to others or avoiding the appearance to others that their ability is lacking (Kaplan et al., 2002). As such, the theory underpins the emphasis on

performance management as well as on setting and agreeing with objectives against which, performance can be measured and managed (Armstrong, 2009). Despite having a psychological basis, the application of the theory in the education system is justified because it is in line with the use of NES which were developed to improve performance.

In the current study, the goals were represented by leadership standards while motivation was related to school leaders'/ school governors' willingness to implement leadership standards because of awareness, involvement and goal ownership. Feedback was represented by a school's performance against the required leadership standards. Standards are important for directing efforts towards the achievement of goals. Motivation is important because it rejuvenates the will to implement goals. Feedback is crucial in the continuation or redirection of efforts towards the attainment of the desired goals as well as for setting future goals. With these components, the theory was deemed suitable for analysing the impact of the implementation of leadership standards in advancing school governance

### **1.11 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Accountability** – Procedures requiring officials and those who seek to influence them to follow established rules defining acceptable processes and outcomes, and to demonstrate that they have followed those procedures (Johnston, 1991).

**Autonomy** -The degree to which local governing bodies such as schools, districts and school boards can make independent decisions about how to structure and operate public schools (Great Schools Partnership, 2014).



**Board of Governors (BoG)** - A group of: teachers, students and community members who, regularly meet and make decisions about the development of secondary schools (MOEST, 2019).

**Decentralisation** -The transfer of responsibility/power to local communities and schools so that they can make their own decisions about many aspects of policy and practice (European Agency, 2017).

**Deconcentration** - A move towards a more democratic model, as some authority and responsibilities are passed to 'lower' system levels (European Agency, 2017).

**Decoupling** - The dissociation between policy directives, implementation, and outcomes (European Agency, 2017).

**Delegation** - Transmission of tasks and administrative functions related to specific functions, usually defined by central authorities (European Agency, 2017).

**Devolution** - Transfer of authority and real responsibility from central to local bodies (European Agency, 2017).

**Governance** - Governance is the sum of the many ways that individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs (Carlsson et al., 1995).

**Leadership** - A process whereby an individual, influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2010).

**Leadership standards** - Expected outcomes that key stakeholders such as parents, students and carers, expect from all education providers in public and private institutions through proper leadership, management and teaching processes which are essential to the achievement of those outcomes (National Education Policy, 2016).

**Parents Teachers Association (PTA)** - A group of: parents, guardians and teachers who, at least, meet once a term to discuss the direction of school development (MOEST, 2013).

**School Governance** - What school leaders do within the context of laws, regulations, administrative instructions and directives originating from the government as they represent people and assume the original authority to determine the type of education a country should provide to its citizens (Aldallal, 2016).

**School Governing Bodies (SGB)** - A statutory body of parents, educators, non-teaching staff and learners (from grade 8 or higher) who seek to work together to promote the well-being and effectiveness of the school community and thereby, enhance learning and teaching ([https:// www.westerncape.gov.za/general-publication/school-governing - bodies-sgbs](https://www.westerncape.gov.za/general-publication/school-governing-bodies-sgbs)).

## **1.12 Chapter Summary**

Conclusively, the chapter encompasses background information about school governance, worldwide; elements of school governance in the democratic days, and details of 3 out of 26 leadership standards in Malawi, including their importance and use. The study intended to investigate the implementation of the 3 leadership standards by examining the leadership of 7 secondary schools that are under the ISEM project. Improving Secondary Education in Malawi project encourages decentralised school governance in its attempts to improve secondary school education in Malawi.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter presents key literature reviewed before the establishment of the study gap by contrasting past research with the current research in terms of study themes, research methods and geographical settings of the study. Creswell (2012) defines a literature review as a written summary of journal articles, books and other documents that describe the past and current state of information on the study topic concerning its objectives. In line with this definition of a literature review, three key areas of literature were reviewed concerning this study. School stakeholders' knowledge, understanding and acquaintance with roles and responsibilities related to national education standards in the improvement of school governance, the extent of involvement of school governing bodies in school governance and how education decentralisation is a factor in the implementation of education standards.

### **2.2 Understanding and Acquaintance with Roles and Responsibilities Concerning School Governance**

#### ***2.2.1 Lack of Understanding by School Governing Bodies***

Juarsa et al. (2021) conducted research on accelerating the fulfillment of National Education Standards, in elementary schools in North Bengkulu Regency, Bengkulu Province, Indonesia. The findings showed that many factors affect the achievement of national education standards at various levels of schools such as school principals and their staff who do not understand how to meet standards in a better direction, financial problems that support compliance with standards, insufficient facilities and infrastructure; lack of concern and contribution from the

school committee and lack of concern and contribution from local governments in overcoming national education standards in schools (Juarsa et al., 2021).

Similarly, Rangongo (2011) explored the functionality of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) concerning the management of finances in the Bahlaloga Circuit Primary Schools in the Capricorn districts of Limpopo province in South Africa. The study revealed that SGBs prevalently lacked an understanding of their designated roles and responsibilities regarding the key positions of the SGB (Rangongo, 2011). Most SGBs also failed to interpret parts of the legislative frameworks in meetings and the meetings lacked procedures such that in some schools, principals chaired meetings instead of chairpersons of the SGB or treasurers, minutes were not read as required or had no authorised signatures such as that of the secretary (Rangongo, 2011).

Apart from that, Sumy and Giridharan (2016) carried out a study on the implementation of good governance in secondary schools in Bangladesh and Nigeria. The findings of the study were obtained from qualitative data and analysis of the content of the study schools. The results showed that school governance processes in secondary schools went unsupervised resulting in the negative impact of corruption such as head teachers' distortion of the decision-making processes.

Along the same lines, shocking challenges about knowledge or incorrect interpretation of the Schools' Act by principals or members of the SGBs were revealed in a study aimed at developing guidelines for school principals and governing bodies conducted by Mestry

(2006) on the efficient and effective management of school funds in South Africa. Themes forthcoming from the study indicated that there was a misconception among various stakeholders, concerning the functions of the SGB in managing the school's fund. The misunderstanding resulted in most SGB treasurers merely endorsing cheques as they continued to bemoan reckless expenditures by school heads.

Another study was conducted by Kandie (2017) in 122 public secondary schools in Baringo County (Education Division), Kenya to establish the extent to which public secondary schools in Kenya practice democratic school governance after observing challenges in the management of the schools. The findings showed that there is still a need for school principals to be enlightened on how to lead schools democratically because they are still in the process of democratising their schools. It was found that students were not given room to give their views on matters that affect them and were excluded from key decision-making bodies. The students could also not be consulted when formulating school rules which could also not be interpreted to them by school principals and teachers.

In Malawi, a study conducted by Wamba (2015) unveiled challenges faced by leaders in management and administration of schools in some educational zones in Malawi. The leaders' professional challenges led to poor supervision, poor record keeping and failure to track records of initiated projects. In agreement, another study by Lucas and Galafa (2018) revealed that most school management committees are not trained or oriented enough for a smooth and swift implementation of policies and projects. However, the study has not specified whether the content, roles and processes laid down in the National Education

Standards have been clearly understood and are being implemented by school leaders as intended. As such, past studies by Lucas and Galafa (2018), Sumy and Giridharan (2016), Rangongo (2011), Chombo (2020), and Mestry (2006) created a research gap for the current study to ascertain if SGBs in Malawi fully understand what is outlined in the National Education Standards to the extent of desired implementation for improved school governance.

### ***2.2.2 Inadequate Training***

Research findings indicate that lack of training hinders administration and management in schools from performing to the expected level. In a study by Ndiang'ui (2013), it was found that lack of training or induction in school financial management was the main cause of challenges in the management of Free Primary Education (FPE) funds for the majority of public primary school head teachers and school committee members in public primary schools in the Nyahuru district of Laikipia in Kenya. The result was a compromised ability to source school funds, procure the right teaching and learning resources, and audit school accounts. Similar results on inadequate training were found in a research study by Chombo (2020) where the majority of principals and school board members failed to understand and perform their roles and responsibilities as expected due to improper training in the Zambezi region in Namibia.

### ***2.2.3 Short-period Training***

Rangongo (2011) conducted research in South African schools in which it was discovered that apart from a complete lack of training, short-period training and the English language

used for training posed a problem with effective training hence a huge training deficiency. As such, some newly elected SGB members experienced financial trainings offered to them on the inception day, as a window dressing.

#### ***2.2.4 Language Barriers to Training***

Some parent components complained that training documents should be presented in local languages other than English, for them to be valuable and understood (Rangongo, 2011). In addition to that, improper training was found to be the root cause of accountability challenges in schools in South Africa. For example, due to inadequate training, some schools paid 300% more than others had paid for equipment resulting in the government being charged exorbitant fees for wasteful expenditure (Rangongo, 2011).

#### ***2.2.5 Lack of/Poor School Leaders' Training in Malawi***

In Malawi, the same was found to be the case when Wamba (2015) investigated the preparation of head teachers for leadership roles with a focus on the in-service experiences of seven head teachers in the Luwanga ward in Mzuzu. Findings of the study revealed that both pre-service and in-service training were almost non-existent such that lack of pre-service or in-service training for head teachers, management committee members and teachers was found to be the commonest barrier towards meeting the Ministry of Education's National Educational Standards in a study conducted in Ulongwe Zone in Balaka by Lucas and Galafa (2018). Poorly trained head teachers and management committee members who are at the core of administration and management at public primary schools proved to be clueless about the implementation of relevant policies, initiatives and projects initiated by the Ministry of

Education. Their lack of training shapes and affects the capabilities and perceptions of the teams the head teachers lead in their schools (Lucas & Galafa, 2018). As a result, management and staff in those schools continuously failed to complement each other in their daily duties and responsibilities because they lacked the necessary skills (Lucas & Galafa, 2018).

In addition to that, the same study by Wamba (2015) revealed challenges solicited from records kept by head teachers of selected primary schools in different zones in the districts of Mangochi, Balaka and Blantyre, as well as data from one Primary Education Advisor (PEA) office for Ulongwe Zone in Balaka, established that the management and administration of schools in the zone faced professional, traditional, political, cultural and religious challenges ranging from poor supervision, poor record keeping, failure to track records about initiated projects.

The current study was, therefore, essential to assess if all school stakeholders in school governance in Malawian secondary schools have been adequately trained to understand their leadership roles and responsibilities for the implementation of education leadership standards.

### **2.3 Extent of Involvement of School Governing Bodies in School Governance**

Research on the involvement of school governing bodies has been largely motivated by revelations that authority was heavily skewed towards principals and teachers (Karlson, 2002). In addition, school management teams and principals usurp the decision-making



duties of the SGBs (Mncube, 2009). As such, several studies have been conducted to assess the extent of involvement of school governing bodies as follows:

### ***2.3.1 Community Involvement***

Wilkins and Gobby (2015) researched the participation of communities in school governance activities in England and Australia, with a focus on the use of educational standards. The findings of the study indicated that there was no collaboration among leaders at various power levels (Wilkins & Gobby, 2015). The researchers explored rural community participation in primary education in three woredas (Administrative divisions of Ethiopia, managed by a local government) in the Horro Guduru Wollaga zone of Oromia Regional state, Ethiopia. Despite the encouraging outcomes, the study unveiled that the implementation of community participation in education is suffering from massive challenges of inadequate funding amidst poverty in the community and fluctuation in the household's income which affected the community's capacity to finance schools.

Consequently, schools had inadequate infrastructure and the existing ones were intended to fix problems quickly and were hence, of low quality. The final finding was inequality between localities and a weak relationship between actors and sectors.

Ranson (2011) also conducted research across UK schools to find out about citizen participation in school governance. Findings from the study established that citizenship participation in school governance is yet to be realised in many communities because

tradition there renders the school a space for professional regulation. As such, community stakeholders get used to observing their distance.

### ***2.3.2 Teacher Involvement***

A study conducted by Kiprop & Kandie (2012) in public secondary schools in Baringo County (Education Division) on teacher participation in decision-making revealed that teachers are not involved in decision making. This could be the reason for student unrest and low performance in Kenya Certificate Secondary Education (KCSE) in the County. Bäckman and Trafford (2007) argue that democratic school governance enhances learning as learners are provided opportunities to maximise their potential. However, few empirical studies have been undertaken to establish the extent to which public secondary schools practice democracy.

### ***2.3.3 Parent and SGBs Involvement***

Limited parent involvement in school governance was also established to a greater degree in comparative research conducted by Lewis et al. (2011). The findings showed that parent participation in school governance and school-level decision-making was less in schools in the U.S. as compared to parents' role in public school governance in South Africa. However, research conducted by Mahlangu (2019) in the same, South African schools, found that some principals continued to manage schools without the full involvement of teachers which contributed to dysfunctional schools by dictating terms to SGBs, confusing their work with that of SGBs, treated parents badly and not giving parents enough opportunity to participate in important matters, and decisions affecting their schools resulting in school-level

centralisation. In addition to that, the results of the pilot research indicated that parent governor's effectiveness is limited by school principals' unwillingness to fully incorporate parent governors into their legitimate roles in favour of ex-principals.

Less involvement of SGBs in financial matters than it makes their functionality central in ensuring accountability in South African schools was again found in a study by (Rangongo 2011) who conducted a study in South African Public Primary Schools. Research results from the study established that in a certain school, the principal played a dominant role in drawing up the school budget. In another school, the finance committee and the formulation of finance policies were done by principals and not SGBs as outlined by section 30 (1) of SASA as part of school development and improvement (Rangongo, 2011). In others, school principals owned SGB meetings and conducted them as a one-man show such that most SGB members were inactive in the meetings (Rangongo, 2011). An education department survey of over five hundred schools conducted in 2011 also revealed that principals squeezed out any chance of meaningful parent negotiation and shared decision-making (DBE School Monitoring Report, 2013).

Furthermore, hindering stakeholders' participation in decision-making came out as the key challenging aspect in leadership circles in the schools. Taylor et al. (2012) investigated on aspects of learning connected to successful learner outcomes, including institutional corporation of parents in ten lower socioeconomic-status national schools under startling conditions in South Africa. The results of the study confirmed that principals mostly viewed parental involvement as interference in the running of the school because of resistance to the

mandated shift in power relationships. Again, serious problems with the involvement of school governing bodies were further discovered in research studies conducted in Nigeria and South Africa (Mahlangu, 2019; Wilkin & Gobby, 2015; Ainley & McKenzie, 2000; European Agency, 2017). However, studies conducted in Malaysia, showed that collaborative management impacted positively on the effectiveness of schools in that country (Ahmad, 1998).

In Malawi, Msiska (2022) reports that in Community Day Secondary Schools, there is a gap in terms of support and monitoring by parents and community, which eventually affects children's goal fulfillment in their education.

#### ***2.3.4 Involvement of school governing bodies in Malawi***

Sackney and Mitchell (2001) state that school principals should facilitate the participation of educators, parents, learners and the school community in all matters that affect their interests. In accordance with the preceding statement, several studies were reviewed in relation to active participation, fulfilment of roles and responsibilities, lack of stakeholder's participation due to poor working relationships emanating from lack of consultation, lack of transparency and accountability as well as religious, political and cultural interference.

#### 2.3.4.1 Active *participation*

##### *(a) Fulfillment of Roles and Responsibilities*

Kufaine and Mtapuri (2014) found that in Zomba schools, there is active community participation to the extent that it has resulted in a school feeding programme which, in a way, helps to retain pupils in primary school. Likewise, a study conducted in Malawian schools by (Chiwaula, Nampota, Meke and Kunje, 2014) found that School Management Committees (SMCs) play their roles and fulfil their responsibilities very well among other things, deciding materials to be purchased and the infrastructure to maintain according to the needs of the schools. For example, the study noted that when a head teacher was informed about his/her school's annual allocation, a meeting of teachers and SMC members would be held to identify priority needs for the school based on the school improvement Plan.

##### *(b) Lack of School Stakeholders' Participation due to Poor Working Relationships*

Lucas and Galafa (2018) conducted a study in the Ulongwe zone in Balaka. The results from the study indicate that mostly, implementation of initiatives to achieve national education standards is met with massive challenges of negative working relationships such as lack of collaboration between head teachers and relevant stakeholders. Apart from that, distant personal relationships between the leaders and the inferiority or superiority complex caused stakeholders to fail to work together in the implementation processes (Lucas & Galafa, 2018). The conflicts can be classified as political, religious and traditional. Specifically, the conflicts that result in implementation challenges include: cultural practices of the feeder community such as traditional events or funeral ceremonies. These cause conflicts because they work

against the implementation strategies of goals and targets of education resulting in minimal or no community support (Lucas & Galafa, 2018).

Apart from cultural practices, political and administrative interference from both politicians and senior officials in the education sector was also noted to divert the efforts of SGBs in initiatives or stop implementing decisions about certain projects to the advantage of those who have influence (Lucas & Galafa, 2018).

In addition to that, the top-down approach by higher authorities forced some initiatives over the implementers without establishing reality with stakeholders at school level resulting in a lack of goal ownership (Lucas & Galafa, 2018).

#### *(c) Lack of Consultation*

Lack of consultation and communication among stakeholders about matters affecting schools sometimes resulted in lack of participation. A review by AfriMAP and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa with a special focus on education shows that although Malawi has slightly improved its reporting record to international human rights monitoring bodies, the reports remain sporadic rather than periodic, and the reporting is often not the product of deep consultation with all stakeholders in the sector (Ng'ambi, 2010).

#### *2.3.4.2 Lack of Transparency and Accountability*

Lack of accountability and transparency among head teachers and Area Development Committees have also been identified as the major cause of most of the challenges facing primary schools in Malawi (Mzembe, 2017). The result is frustration and lack of participation by some stakeholders.

#### *2.3.4.3 Cultural, Religious and Political Interference*

Disagreements erupting between religious, political or cultural leaders and school authorities may cause lack of participation and implementation. Sometimes religious proprietors who advocate for their agenda may interfere with school authorities' implementation of initiatives aimed at improving school governance (Lucas & Galafa, 2018). For example, Kamande (2019) reports about the closure of a Christian secondary school (Mmanga Secondary School) in Balaka District which was headed by a Christian head teacher who was a member of the school's SMC. The community wanted students to wear Hijab at a time it was not stipulated by school policies. As such, there was conflict of interest as to whether they follow the school's policy of not wearing Hijab at school or bowing down to the culture of the society. The end results were religious and cultural conflicts between the head teacher and the community.

Most of the research findings from the above studies apparently differ from what is recommended by Sackney and Mitchel (2001).

## **2.4 How Decentralisation is a Factor in the Implementation of National Education Standards**

Decentralisation has the potential to enhance efficiency and bring forth transparency, participation and democratic ethos to the functioning of a system (Kameshwara et al, 2023). In line with this, most countries developed and developing, have been aiming at strengthening autonomy and giving more responsibility to educational institutions as the foundation of the education system (Eurydice, 2007). The necessity to understand who controls and who ought to control education' is imperative behind exploring decentralisation in terms of administration, personnel, finances, resources and management of curriculum and assessment of learning (Zajda, 2012). However, systematic evaluations of decentralised systems are lacking (European Agency, 2017). As such, in the school context, decentralisation is operationalized and measured using indicators such as: direct control over resources in decision making, teacher-parent alliances in the administration of the school, feedback from students, procedural mechanisms for translating students' voice into policy decisions, participation of parents in decision making, authority over employment and management of staff including recruitment, termination of contracts, oversight of conduct, establishing mechanisms of accountability and incentive structures, among others (Kameshwara et.al, 2023). Several reviews of the literature were, therefore, done to establish the study's research gap in connection with how decentralisation is a factor in the implementation of school governance activities and by implication, national education standards in practice.



### ***2.4.1 Community Participation***

The 1996, Malawi Government Decentralisation Policy implementation (capacity assessment and resource needs survey) in Lilongwe revealed that PTA/SMC members strongly disagreed with the statement that they were part of the participatory style of school management (Malawi government, 1996). The finding was similar in both rural and urban schools and is consistent with the literature of Davies et al. (2003); Rose (2005) and Yamada (2014) which found that community involvement in school activities has been relegated to a few “elites” in the community who are literate and have time to serve on behalf of the community. Moreover, PTA/SMC members in urban schools believed communities should be providing financial resources to schools when public inputs fall short, unlike PTA/SMC members in rural schools, who believed they shouldn't. Two overarching issues have emerged from the study; (1) Policy clarity and (2) reform in contexts of poverty (Kameshwara et al., 2023).

### ***2.4.2. Lack of Autonomy***

A study conducted by Ainley and Mackenzie (2000) in Australia on school governance, produced significant evidence that SGBs' involvement was not fully autonomous at school level. Correspondingly, Daba (2010) conducted a study to investigate how decentralisation has improved community participation in education.

More, problems were unveiled by Gamage & Zajda (2009) in a study concerning devolution, the transfer of power and authority to decentralised schools and the new roles of the school community. The article evaluated the degree of success achieved by self-managed schools in realising set objectives and outcomes on governance, resources, curricular innovations, and

quality in education. The findings of the study verified that the mandate of SGBs over decision-making and resource management is greatly limited because the activities of local government are supervised by the state/provincial government through the Department of Local Government, which largely controls local bodies.

Apart from that, Wilkins and Gobby (2015) researched the participation of communities in school governance activities in England and Australia, with a focus on the use of educational standards. The researcher explored decentralisation in primary education in three woredas (Administrative divisions of Ethiopia, managed by a local government) in the Horro Guduru Wollaga zone of Oromia Regional state, Ethiopia. Among others, findings of the study indicated that the implementation of decentralisation was faced with a lot of challenges because the P.T.A and Kebelle Education and Training Board (KETB) had limited power and control over the performance of teachers as well as head teachers (Wilkins & Gobby, 2015).

#### ***2.4.3 Lack of Decentralisation***

Another study conducted on decentralisation and rural community participation by Benjamin and Cheruto (2010) in the Keiyo District in Kenya, revealed that the implementation of FPE was negatively affected due to lack of decentralised processes that delayed the disbursement of funds by the government.

In Malawi, a study conducted by Sineta (2002) in Zomba revealed that despite literally understanding the definition of decentralisation District Education Managers, Primary

Education Advisors, Desk Officers, and Head Teachers, in Zomba displayed some confusion about what is practically involved in decentralisation. In addition to that, there were mixed views about which functions to decentralise (Sineta, 2002). Whilst some respondents supported decentralisation as a way to improve the educational system, others thought otherwise, stating reasons for possible corruption, favouritism and diversion of funds under a decentralised system (Sineta, 2002).

A study by Kufaine and Matapuri (2014) in Malawi, also found that while the decentralisation of education is critical and is also a valid initiative for a country like Malawi, it is not clear how education effectiveness will be reached. The article argues that the process of decentralisation in Malawi is incomplete because it has not been decentralised to the school level (Kufaine & Mtapuri, 2014).

The international and national literature reviewed above showed school governance problems and disparities that lead to undesirable implementation of education standards. Most of the research studies focused on school stakeholders' participation in school governance, the significance of teacher participation in school decision making and parental involvement in school governance. However, few empirical studies have been undertaken to examine how the implementation of NES is a possible opportunity for advancing school governance in Malawi. Therefore, research had to be conducted to document data on specific standards for specific countries.

Methodologically, researchers like Wilkins and Gobby (2015), used inference to conclude qualitative data collected in their studies on the participation of communities in school governance in England and Australia while Ainley and Mackenzie (2000) engaged in qualitative research. Inference is problematic as it may give room for bias and it does not cater for reliable generalisability to all countries while qualitative research does not result in evidence-based investigation. As such, previous research informed the researcher's decision on mixed methodology to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. The current study also stands to be an opportunity for varying methodologies in similar research.

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

Based on the understanding that various aspects of decentralisation may impact the administrative coherence among various stakeholders, affect instructional delivery systems and shape learning outcomes towards the set national education standards in schools, the chapter is an outline of contextual, methodological, and content literature from various past studies read and reviewed concerning the objectives and the topic of the current study. The current study concerns how school governing bodies understand leadership standards; their involvement in implementing leadership standards 17, 18, 19 and 24, and assessing how decentralisation in the secondary education sector is a factor in the implementation of leadership standards 17, 18, 19 and 24, regarding school governance.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

Research methodology is defined as the art of how and why researchers gain knowledge in research contexts (Creswell, 2014). It concerns the techniques, steps, and tools that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying the research problem as well as the justification for their selection. As such, it is essential to argue that researchers need to know which methods and techniques are usable in their study besides knowing the criteria for deciding to use certain techniques and procedures while discarding others (Kothari, 2014). This chapter presents a detailed description of the study's research paradigm, the research design, the study site, the study population, study sample size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, trustworthiness procedures, ethical considerations and data dissemination plan.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

This study adopted a pragmatic paradigm. Bryman (1988) defines a research paradigm as a cluster of beliefs and dictates that influence what should be studied by scientists in a particular discipline, how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted. Pragmatism is defined as a philosophical tradition that considers words and thought as tools and instruments for prediction, problem-solving, and action while rejecting the idea that the function of thought is to describe, represent or mirror reality (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). It is oriented towards solving practical problems in the real world, rather than making assumptions about the nature of knowledge (Feilzer, 2010). Pragmatism highlights three core principles namely, emphasis on actionable knowledge; recognition of the interconnectedness between experience, knowing, and acting; and inquiry as an experiential process. As such,

pragmatism informed the researcher's choice of research design, data collection methods and data collection instruments concerning the nature of the study. Pragmatism allows for the researcher's emphasis on some aspects of the research question, use of personal values and close interaction or experience with reality.

### **3.3 Research Design**

Bryman (2004) defines a research design as a framework for the collection and analysis of data. This study used a mixed-method design to have an in-depth probe into unclarified issues that could not be captured by the quantitative method only. With the mixed-method design, the researcher was able to effectively facilitate triangulation. Triangulation was essential for the researcher to have a broader understanding of the research problem as well as increased research credibility through diverse data collection methods and sources of information. A mixed methodology was also chosen to enable complementarity between the broader quantitative sample size and the small qualitative sample. In this way, each of the research method's limitations was dealt with and the ability to collect comprehensive data. Specifically, the study used a descriptive research design to explain and analyse first-hand data.

### **3.4 Study Site**

The study was conducted in 7 schools chosen out of the total number of schools under the ISEM project in CWED. Schools under ISEM had better potential for aiding the examination and assessment of the implementation of leadership standards 17, 18 and 24 because, before this study, the first phase of the ISEM project was working with school governing bodies and

was concerned with a practical implementation of several standards on school governance as part of improving Secondary School Education in the schools. As such, a list of ISEM schools in Lilongwe rural East in CWED was given to the researcher at the Education Division office but the researcher had to choose randomly from the names of the schools to have the sample.

### **3.5 Study Population**

A study population is defined as the broader group of people to whom the study results will apply (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the targeted population comprised head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of departments, governing body members, and prefects from 7 schools, out of the larger population of schools that are under the ISEM project in CWED. Head teachers and deputy head teachers were purposively chosen due to the nature of their jobs and their professional positions in the chosen schools. For triangulation purposes, heads of departments from participating schools were purposively chosen in their capacity as overseers of departments. School governing body members and prefects from the selected schools were purposively chosen in their capacity as stakeholders in school governance to get information on how key school managers involve and relate with other school governing stakeholders. In addition, the SGBs were chosen in their capacity as custodians of records. Finally, the topmost SGB executive members and prefects were also targeted to get more information for a true reflection of decentralisation in the schools, that is, to assess how decentralisation in the secondary education sector is a factor in the implementation of leadership standards.

### **3.6 Sampling**

Sampling is defined as the process of obtaining information about an entire population or universe by examining only a part of it (Kothari, 2014). It is a process by which representative things are selected from a bigger group to become the basis for estimating the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation or outcome, regarding a bigger group.

#### ***3.6.1 Sampling Techniques***

Sampling is the technique by which a researcher specifies the characteristics of the population of interest and then locates participants who match those characteristics (Plalys, 2008). The location of participants depends on knowledge about a situation or experience being studied; willingness to talk and present a range of views as well as prior knowledge of participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In the study, a random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of schools. Head teachers and deputy head teachers were sampled based on their capacity as leaders of the randomly chosen schools. Heads of departments were conveniently sampled regardless of seniority in the headship of their departments. School Governing Body members and prefects were purposively sampled for triangulation purposes in their capacity as school governance stakeholders. The topmost SGBs and prefects in all schools were also purposively chosen as the most informed of their groups for qualitative data collection. A school's selection was determined by its active participation in the ISEM project. This qualified 7 schools out of the total number of schools under the ISEM project in CWED.



### **3.7 Sample Size**

For the study, data had to be collected from 7 head teachers; 7 deputy head teachers; 21 heads of department, 106 prefects, and 21 SGBs. The sample choice was motivated by the intention to categorise leaders at a school for triangulation purposes.

#### ***3.7.1 Quantitative Data Sample Size***

The quantitative sample was made up of 7 head teachers, 7 deputy head teachers, 21 heads of departments, 19 BoG committee members, and 106 prefects from the schools. These filled closed-ended questionnaires with specified information.

#### ***3.7.2 Qualitative Data Sample Size***

The qualitative sample comprised a purposively selected sample of 3 representatives from the SGB, including some from the prefects' council at a school. Consideration was made on the position held by the interviewee in relation to other members of the same category of SGB or prefects to select the most informed participants for triangulation. As such, Chairpersons of BoG/ P.T.A, president/ Head girl/ Vice president/ Vice head girl and one member were selected based on the belief that they are more knowledgeable about what happens in their schools.

### **3.8 Data Collection**

#### ***3.8.1 Data Collection Method***

Creswell and Clark (2011) recommend that researchers collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative (mixed) data in a simultaneous rigorous manner to get two forms of data. Taking

into account this recommendation and the fact that the study used a mixed- methodology, a combination of quantitative, survey questionnaires and interview guides were used to respectively, collect quantitative (numeral) data and qualitative (text) data immediately after another, pending comparison, analysis, and discussion. In this case, the collection of quantitative data preceded the collection of qualitative data. Even though the qualitative and quantitative data were collected independently, collecting qualitative data helped the researcher to deal with areas that needed more explanation such as the understanding of NES or education policies, the extent of decentralisation and the level of involvement for BoGs in school management by key school leaders. Collecting qualitative data also helped the researcher to achieve triangulation of data to have more accurate results. In this way, data collected from the interviews was used to clarify the preceding quantitative data to obtain trusted findings.

### ***3.8.2 Data Collection Instruments***

#### *3.8.2.1 Quantitative- Closed-ended questionnaires*

The study used closed-ended questionnaires (See Appendix B) to collect quantitative data from head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of department, governing body members and the prefect body. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions to gather information from respondents (Mcleod, 2018). The use of closed-ended questionnaires helped to gather factual reliable and valid data from the respondents while preventing participant bias, confusion and cognitive load of respondents. Apart from that, the nature of the closed-ended questionnaire facilitated data collection since they required the respondent to just put a tick on the answer chosen. On the part of the researcher, closed-ended questionnaires were chosen to facilitate data analysis and to prevent exorbitant research costs.

The questionnaires were written in English but where necessary, some content in the questionnaires would be clarified in Chichewa, especially with respondents from the school governing bodies.

In terms of composition, the questionnaire was divided into sections A to D. Section A contained background information. Section B sought to gather data on the first objective of the study (How school governing bodies understand national education standards 17, 18, and 24. Section C sought to collect data on the second objective (Evaluating the extent to which school governing bodies in CWED are involved in the implementation of education standards. Section D sought to get data on the third objective of the study (Assessing if decentralisation is a factor in the implementation of education standards). Apart from the sections, the questionnaire was also divided into 3 tables representing the three education standards starting with education standards 17 (school governance), education standard 18 (School leadership) and education standards 24 (Management of buildings and facilities).

### **3.9. Qualitative- Interview Guide**

To collect qualitative data from SGB representatives in all 7 schools, a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C) was used. An interview guide is one of the most common interview guides where many precise questions and their follow-up questions are listed along with a few topic areas (Smulowitz, 2017). Smulowitz (2017) describes an interview guide as consisting of questions or topics or a combination that runs from 'unstructured' to 'highly structured'. The use of an interview guide was essential because it allowed for further probing into issues that could not be clarified by quantitative methods. On language, the interview

guide used in this study was written in English and the interviews were conducted in either English or Chichewa depending on the language comfort ability of the respondent. For accurate and trusted findings, the interviews were recorded in the language used by the respondent using an audio recorder during the interview process. Data provided by each interviewee was later transcribed in Chichewa and translated into English, according to the research context. If the interview was already in English, the recordings would just be transcribed in the same English. In terms of composition, the interview guide was divided into sections A, B and C. Section A contained background information. Section B aimed to gather data on the first objective (Investigating how school governing bodies in CWED understand education standards 17, 18 and 24) and section C aimed to gather data on the third objective (To evaluate the extent to which school governing bodies are involved in the implementation of education standards).

### **3.10 Pilot Study**

A pilot study is defined as a small study conducted in advance of a planned project to test aspects of a research design (Kumar, 2011). In the study, 2 separate schools under the ISEM project were used to pre-test data collection instruments and data collection methodology before embarking on the real study to deal with any arising challenges of usability of data collection methods or data collection instruments. Participants with analogous characteristics to those of the main study were also used. The participants included head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of departments, BoG members and prefects. Quantitative and qualitative data types obtained from 2 schools in which the pilot study was conducted were analysed and compared to assess consistency in the usability of methodologies and data collection instruments. The pilot study revealed some problems with the clarity of some questions to

participants. The questions had to be rephrased before the final research phase. In the end, it was certified that the data collection methods and instruments were accordingly usable.

### **3.11 Validity-Quantitative**

Kumar (2011) explains that validity is the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure. Validity is concerned with face validity and content validity. Face validity is the face value of an instrument to measure what they are supposed to measure about various issues of content. Content validity is related to different elements, skills and behaviours that have to be adequately and effectively measured. In this study, both content and face validity were concerned with the usability of the questionnaires by participants. In the whole study, validity was ensured by conducting a pilot study to overcome possible negative risks in data collection instruments and all data collection instruments were reviewed by experts in the field of research, specifically, the research supervisor. Seeking expert opinion eliminates structural, grammatical and semantic errors, for the general refinement of questionnaires in terms of the number of items (Fraenkel, 2015). The process helped to polish up the questionnaires and guided interview forms in terms of question obscurity, poor question structuring and unnecessary content, before the data collection process.

### **3.12 Rigour and Trustworthiness - Qualitative**

In qualitative terms, rigour is a way of establishing trust or confidence in the findings of a research study. It allows the researcher to establish consistency in the methods used over time

and provides an accurate representation of the population studied. It has aspects of credibility (applicability); transferability (consistency); dependability and neutrality (confirmability).

To ensure that there is rigour and trustworthiness in the data, data collection tools were given out to peers for member checking before use. Apart from that, expert opinion was also sought from the research supervisor after developing the questionnaires and interview guide forms to eliminate possible mistakes. The data collection instruments were also pre-tested to establish usability then triangulation was used in terms of data sources and a variety of methods were used for data collection.

### **3.13 Data Analysis**

Being a mixed-method study, the data collected had to be arranged into quantitative and qualitative classes first. It was then analysed separately before reconciling it into a combined whole for discussion. Consideration was made on the requirements of quantitative and qualitative approaches to data analysis before a step-by-step analysis.

#### ***3.13.1 Quantitative Data Analysis***

Quantitative data collected in the study was analysed using a software package called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In terms of the analysis method, data from questionnaires was fed into SPSS and calculated using descriptive statistics. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was chosen to provide an efficient and organised way to manage the expected large quantitative data sets to prevent calculation errors. Descriptive

statistics produce a basic summary of each variable in the data, by showing a proportionate breakdown of the categories for each variable (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the first category was based on the sharing of information about ‘School vision’ and ‘Education policies’ by key school leaders to students, parents, P.T.A. and other, village heads. The second category was based on education standard 17 (School governance). The third category was based on education standard 18 (School leadership), the final category was based on education standard 24 (maintenance of buildings and facilities) and the final category was based on school governing bodies' involvement. The statistics were then used to establish relationships related to school visions, awareness of roles and responsibilities as well as knowledge of education standards by various categories of school governors. The results from these were presented in tables just as it is recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006); Nowell, et al. (2017) and Creswell (2014).

### ***3.13.2 Qualitative Data Analysis***

Creswell (2007) argues that study objectives and themes that emerge from data must be used to classify and explain the findings of a study. In line with this recommendation, qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with the BoG representatives was analysed manually using thematic analysis, according to the study's objectives. The themes emerging from the data were derived by inference depending on the relationship to the study's objectives and key literature reviewed before analysis.

The process started with transcription of raw data, reading data for familiarisation, translation, coding, theme identification, summarising information into higher levels of

categorisation to come up with patterns of meanings, categorising codes according to what is concerned in a particular leadership standard under particular objectives, categorising themes to deriving inferred final themes from surface data. Themes like understanding of leadership standards 17, 18 and 24, school governing bodies understanding of national education policies, and management of buildings and facilities were derived under objective one (To examine school governing bodies understanding of national education standards 17, 18 and 24). Themes like partnership by stakeholders, transparency and accountability, monitoring of lessons by the P.T.A, water conservation, selective involvement and lack of washrooms were derived under objective 2 (To assess the extent of involvement of school governing bodies in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24 in CWED). Lack of autonomy by school governing bodies and lack of funds were derived under objective 3 (To assess if decentralisation is a factor to the implementation of education standards). Finally, integrated conclusions were generated from the objectives and themes that arose from the findings to produce a report of results.

### **3.14 Ethical Consideration**

Ethical consideration concerns working within a human rights discourse and its associated responsibility values so that participants are protected (Shawa, 2017). In ensuring participant protection, consent and anonymity were of primary concern in the study. To achieve this, the researcher followed acceptable guidelines for conducting research.



### ***3.14.1 Permission to Conduct Research***

Before the study, the researcher was cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Committee (MZUNIREC) (see Appendix E). After clearance, a letter of introduction was written introducing the researcher to authorities concerned with the study site (see Appendix D). Apart from this, consent was sought from the gatekeepers like the Education Division Manager (see Appendix F) and school head teachers (See Appendix G) to conduct research in schools under their trust. This was complemented by seeking formal consent (See Appendix A) from individual participants who had to voluntarily sign consent forms before the data collection process. The researcher also gave verbal and written assurances about the confidentiality and anonymity with which the participants' identities and those of their schools would be held. Therefore, for this study, the schools and participants were christened by alphabetical letters A, B, D, E, F, G and H, to conceal their real names. Participants' willingness to withdraw their participation in the study was guaranteed. Apart from the above, access to data collected was strictly limited to the researcher from the time of collection, until the time for handing it over to the supervisor at the college of study, as ethically required for confidentiality purposes.

### ***3.14.2 Informed Participant Consent***

The participants were given a full explanation about the non-financial attachment to participation in the study, as well as their rights to know what kind of information they were to provide before the commencement of the data collection process. Alongside the explanation about their rights, the research purpose, focus, data collection process, data management and the implications of their participation in the research, were explained to them in detail. Particulars of the researcher, research supervisor and institution of the study

were included in the letter of introduction and participant consent forms which the participants signed before the commencement of data collection. This was done for verification of the researcher's identity and reporting, in case of eventualities that would demand so. It was also meant to assure participants of the researcher's honesty.

### ***3.14.3 Use of Evidence-based Research Method***

To prevent researcher bias, evidence-based recording was employed when conducting interviews to collect qualitative data. The research was also funder-bias-free since it was self-funded.

### **3.15 Data Dissemination Plan**

After the study, information will be deservedly shared with key stakeholders taking into account all the required ethics of confidentiality and anonymity. The stakeholders include participants, education policymakers and academic supervisors. The ethics include limiting dissemination to only those directly concerned while honouring only official requests made of the data through the academic institution under which the study was held. There will also be restrictions on the use of data and results according to research ethics. No other person apart from the institution of study and the research supervisor will have the power to authorise access to the data.

### **3.16 Chapter Summary**

In summary, the chapter comprises a detailed description of the study's mixed method approach which involved the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data that was separately analysed and later merged. Samples for the study's data collection included 7 randomly selected schools that participated in the ISEM Project in CWED, where data was collected using a survey. The information gathered was ethically handled to protect the participants.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

### **4.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter presents analysed results of the study which was conducted in schools A, B, D, E, F, G, and H in CWED to examine the implementation of leadership standards 17, 18 and 24, regarding the improvement of school governance. The study was guided by the following objectives: to investigate how school governing bodies in CWED understand National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24, concerning school governance; to evaluate the extent to which school governing bodies in CWED are involved in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24; and to assess if decentralisation of the secondary education sector is a factor to the implementation of the education standards 17, 18 and 24, concerning school governance. To analyse collected data, the study employed Goal Theory developed by Latham and Locke (1979), particularly its aspects of goal setting in measuring performance, acceptance of goals by implementers and getting feedback (Armstrong, 2009). In line with the theory, analysed results and their discussions are presented statistically as well as thematically in the order of objectives of the study.

### **4.2 Respondents**

A total of 162 participants filled out closed-ended questionnaires to give their views on the specified quantitative data. Apart from that, 14 participants were interviewed to get qualitative data. This brought the total number of respondents to 176. One hundred and sixty two represent a 100% quantitative response rate despite some invalid questionnaires which brought variations in the number of respondents in some categories. Out of the total number of 162 participants, 94 were males aged 12 to 56. Whereas, 68 were females aged 13 to 45

### **4.3 Presentation of the Results**

Presentation of results from data will follow a combination of quantitative and qualitative organisation in categories related to the study's objectives. The categories are as follows: respondents' knowledge of sub-categories of school governance such as schools' vision and educational policies; understanding of education standards 17, 18 and 24; parents' understanding of their roles and responsibilities; mother groups' understanding of their roles and responsibilities in improving the schools; head teachers and senior staff prioritisation of students' education, safety and care; active participation of school governing bodies in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24 concerning school governance as well as school leadership; management of buildings and facilities and assessment of how the low-level decentralisation of the secondary education sector is a factor to the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24 by school governing bodies.

#### ***4.3.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Data***

##### **4.3.1.1 How School Governing Bodies Understand National Education Standards Concerning School Governance**

###### **(a) Understanding of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24 by School Governing Stakeholders**

To analyse the understanding of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24 by students, parents, governing bodies and village heads, as stakeholders in school governance, stakeholders' awareness and by implication, understanding of what is supposed to be implemented in education standards 17, 18 and 24 had to be investigated. Data collected had

to include the understanding and acquaintance with school visions and education policies by students, parents, SGBs and village heads. Since 'understanding' is abstract, aspects such as awareness and ability to explain were used to collect qualitative data in order to examine the school governing bodies' understanding. Qualitative data was collected from SGB representatives PTA, BOG and prefect body through interviews. Quantitative data was also collected from head teachers, deputy head teachers, Heads of departments, prefects and SGB members who filled questionnaires. The data was collected on how information about school visions and education policies is shared with various stakeholders, and if the school governing bodies are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Results of quantitative data are presented in Table 4.1. Each Table of quantitative results is followed by an explanation of the results in terms of major classes of agreement and disagreement. 'Agreement' responses combine strong agreement and agreement frequencies while 'disagreement' responses comprise strong disagreement as well as disagreement frequencies. The explanations will be a combination of quantitative and qualitative findings on the same objective for comparison and complementary purposes.

**Table 4.1: How School Governing Stakeholders Understand National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24**

S/ N	Stakeholders with whom information is shared with	A		U		D		Null	Totals	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	(n)	F	%
1	Students	106	65.5	16	9.9	35	21.6	3	162	100
2	Parents	99	61.1	22	13.6	41	25.4	0	162	100
3	Governing bodies	100	61.7	34	21.0	28	17.3	0	162	100
4	Village heads	81	50	42	25.9	39	24.1	0	162	100

**KEY**

SN	SA	A	U	D	SD	F	(n)	%
Serial number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Frequency	Null	Percentage

Results in Table 4.1, show that 65.5% of all respondents in S/N 1 agreed that students are knowledgeable about education standards 17, 18 and 24. Slightly over 61% of the respondents in S/N 2 decided that parents are cognisant of education standards 17, 18 and 24. Close to 62% of the respondents in S/N 3 indicated that school governing bodies are aware of the education standards 17, 18 and 24, and 50% of the respondents in S/N 4 approved that village heads are fully informed about education standards 17, 18 and 24. However, qualitative data collected from 14 participants that were interviewed from the students and community SGB showed that none was able to demonstrate knowledge of the education standards when asked to give a detailed description. Very few could relate the

implementation of specific aspects to their related NES with full understanding. For example, when asked to explain some National Education Standards, a BoG vice chairperson at school 'F' said,

*That we must plant trees around our school, and...we must consult each other when we are making decisions according to...to make our school run efficiently (BoG vice Chairperson school 'F', personal communication, August 11, 2024).*

Some participants took education standards 17, 18 and 24 for duties of BoG members. They described National Education Standards as ensuring students' attendance, maintaining discipline and helping to improve student learning in a school. For instance, giving her description of the National Education Standards, a BoG member at school 'B' said,

*Some of the educational standards are making sure that teachers do their teaching job when they come to work and to make sure that learners come to school (BoG member school 'B', Personal communication, July22, 2022).*

Whereas the BoG vice chair at school 'F' said,

*National education standards...maybe I have f...I have forgotten (BoG vice Chairperson school 'F', personal communication, August 11, 2024).*

The failure to explain was there despite BoG members' confirmation of being trained and knowledgeable about the NES as well as their roles and responsibilities. However, when the school governing bodies were asked to explain their roles and responsibilities, they managed to do so.



(b) Understanding of School Visions, National Education Policies by  
School Governing Stakeholders

To analyse the level of understanding on education standards, data had to include the understanding and acquaintance with school visions and education policies by students, parents, SGBs and village heads. As such, qualitative and quantitative data was collected on how information about the school visions and education policies is shared with various stakeholders, and if the school governing bodies are aware of their roles and responsibilities. To get qualitative data, representatives of SGBs were interviewed. For quantitative data, 7 head teachers, 7 deputy head teachers, 21 heads of departments, 19 BoG members and 121 prefects filled out closed-ended questionnaires subsequent results of the analysed data are shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: How Students, Parents, School Governing Bodies and Village Heads Understand School Visions and National Education Policies**

S/ N	Stakeholders who information is shared with	A		U		D		Null (n)	Totals	
		F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
1	Students	136	84	8	4.9	18	11.1	0	162	100
2	Parents	113	69.8	20	12.4	23	14.2	6	162	100
3	Governing bodies	120	74.1	22	14.2	20	12.3	0	162	100
4	Village heads	109	67.3	25	15.4	28	17.3	0	162	100

**KEY**

SN	SA	A	U	D	SD	F	(n)	%
Serial number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Frequency	Null	Percentage

Based on the results in Table 4.2, 84% of all the respondents in S/N 1 confirmed that students are aware of their school's visions and education policies; Almost 70% of all the respondents in S/N 2 held the view that parents are familiar with the information on school visions and education policies; More than 74% of all the respondents in S/N 3 concurred with the expectation that information about school visions and education policies is understood by school governing bodies; and 67.3% of all the respondents in S/N 4 agreed that village heads comprehend what school visions and education policies are.

However, when participants were asked to describe some of the National Education Policies and their school vision during qualitative interviews some participants could not do so. For example, a BoG chairperson at school 'H', could not recall the composition or related aspects of National Education Policies and her school's vision. She was quoted as saying,

*We had a whole day of training and we were told about all the policies although I cannot pinpoint them one by one (BoG chairperson- school 'H', personal communication, August 16, 2022).*

Specifically on policies, less than eight participants out of the whole qualitative sample failed to mention at least two National Educational Policies. A BoG chairperson at school 'F' doubtfully said,

*A a...some of the policies that I know concern terminal tests that are administered every term and the Ministry of Education takes it as a way of encouraging and preparing students for national examinations. Yaa, one of those things.... The second one is we make sure that students should be disciplined according to the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Education. Students should not destroy school property at a school (BoG chairperson- school 'F', personal communication, August 11, 2022).*

Only one policy was popularly mentioned by the respondents who managed to mention something on policies (Re-admission Policy). A BoG member from the student body at school 'F' confidently explained,

*... For example, mm...the time we started Form One, we were almost ...109 but by the time we reached Form Three, many had been impregnated. Now, some of the girls are in Form Three such that we have a few girls in Form Four. This means that girls are*

*now readmitted after falling pregnant, as one of their policies (Student BoG member-school 'F', personal communication, August 16, 2022).*

This was echoed by another student BoG member at school 'G' who said,

*If a girl Child...have...has been impregnated, she have...she has to give birth; she comes back to school (Student BoG member-school 'G', personal communication, August 11, 2022).*

The two respondents' knowledge explained that their knowledge about the Re-admission Policy was attributed to the fact that most non-governmental organisations and the ISEM project have taken a great role in sensitising students and communities about the policy for the sake of the girl child.

Qualitative evidence from the schools also indicated that the school governing bodies know something about National Education Standards, Education Policies and School Visions but they are not in a position to explain the composition and their related aspects. to demonstrate full knowledge of National Education Standards, National Education Policies and School Visions. For instance, most participants mentioned some activities that they do to prevent environmental degradation in line with the water conservation policy but not its related policy.

#### 4.3.1.2 School Governing Bodies' Involvement in the Implementation of Leadership Standards 17, 18 and 24

To assess school governing bodies involvement in the implementation of leadership standards 17, 18 and 24, data was collected on NES 17 (school governance, NES 18 (school leadership) and NES 24 (management of buildings and facilities) as follows:

*(a) School Governing Bodies' Active Participation in the Implementation of  
National Education Standard 17: School Governance*

To analyse the involvement of SGBs in the implementation of the NES 17, quantitative data was collected from head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of departments and prefects on the involvement of school governing bodies in various activities related to the implementation of National Education Standard 17 as an indicator of school governance. In addition to the quantitative findings, qualitative data was also collected from representative BoG members on the same objective as a source of triangulation. To capture targeted quantitative details of school governance, data subcategories of National Education Standard 17 were used as it can be seen in the following Table 4.3.

**Table 4. 3 : Data on the Involvement of School Governing Bodies in the Implementation of National Education Standard 17 - School**

**Governance**

S/ N	Component of Education Standard 17	A		U		D		Null	Totals	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	(n)	F	%
1	High attendance and frequency of BoG meetings	112	69.2	25	15.4	24	14.9	1	162	99.4
2	Training and knowledge of responsibilities	127	78.4	18	11.1	17	10.5	0	162	100
3	Activities to encourage parent involvement, accountability and communication with the parent stakeholders	127	78.4	17	10.5	18	11.1	0	162	100
4	Active role in budgeting for all school funds	84	51.9	27	16.7	51	31.5	0	162	100
5	Partnership with the local community	112	69.1	22	13.6	28	17.3	0	162	100
6	Active fundraising	90	55.5	26	16.1	46	28.4	0	162	100
7	Meeting documentation	103	63.6	30	18.5	29	17.9	0	162	100
8	Active role in ensuring accountability	89	54.9	27	16.7	46	28.5	0	162	100
9	Active role in school improvement planning	112	69.2	17	10.5	33	20.4	0	162	100
10	Effective communication with all stakeholders	78	48.2	35	21.6	49	30.3	0	162	100

**KEY**

SN	SA	A	U	D	SD	F	(n)	%
Serial number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Frequency	Null	Percentage

Out of the total number of respondents, statistical evidence in Table 4.3, displays that a high respondents' rate (more than 63%) of all the respondents in S/N 7 which agreed that meetings are documented. A response rate of 69.2% agreed that there is high attendance of regular, purposeful and well-documented BoG meetings by school governing bodies in S/N1. The same was reflected in results of qualitative interviews on partnership among school stakeholders in school leadership. It was found that SGBs mostly work in partnership with key school leaders in decision-making in meetings showing that SGBs take part in activities that are aimed at benefiting the schools. For instance, a member of the student body at school 'B' said,

*.... Yes, they work together. Most of the time we see that they hold their meetings together in that school block (points) to discuss what to do to improve education (Student BoG member-school 'B', personal communication, July 25, 2022).*

Quantitative findings also showed high response rate of agreement as recorded in S/N 2 and S/N 3 on 'training of BoG members and knowledge of their roles and responsibilities as well as on activities organised by school governing bodies to encourage parent and community involvement in improving the schools. In both cases, the response rate was 78.4%. A significant number of 69.2% of all respondents agreed that there is a partnership between key school governors and the local community in S/N 5. Complementarily, qualitative findings from interviews also showed that school governing bodies take part in school activities that require their representation as stakeholders. For example, when asked if the SGBs, parents

and their surrounding communities work together in implementing National Education Standards and National Educational Policies, a BoG member at School 'B' said,

*... Yes, we work together...there is a good relationship with those running the school and we are free to do what we want (BoG member-school 'B', personal communication, July 25, 2022).*

In addition to that, over 55% of all respondents in S/N 6 indicated that SGBs actively participate in raising funds for the schools. Almost 55% of all respondents in S/N 8 agreed that governing bodies take part in ensuring accountability of school funds and disseminating information about expenditures to other community stakeholders. Nearly 52% of all respondents in S/N 4 concurred with the assumption that SGBs take an active role in budgeting for all school funds. Similarly, during qualitative interviews, a BoG member at school D said,

*... This school does things openly. I will repeatedly explain that when we say there is something that causes problems, it is developmental funds contributed by students or parents. However, there has been nothing disappointing; showing that there is transparency and accountability. When we call on parents to contribute, they first of all demand to know how the money contributed by students has been used and if there is a shortfall, how much is it? After they get satisfied, then they contribute (BoG member- school D, personal communication, July 28, 2022).*

Likewise, SGB members explained that they take part in decision-making during the planning stage and purchase of resources for developmental projects. Equally important, exactly 48% of the total number of all the respondents in S/N 10 agreed that key school governors communicate effectively with all school stakeholders. During qualitative



interviews, SGB members added that they are called to witness aid given to schools. The BoG Chairperson of school 'B' attested to accountability and transparency by the headteacher and senior staff on matters of donor support as follows:

*As soon as the head teacher and staff members got information about the donation of bicycles by donors from 'Bicycle relief' to girl students, we were called to be informed (BoG chairperson-school B, personal communication, July 25, 2022).*

Apart from that, over 69% of all the respondents in S/N 9 agreed that school governors take an active role in school improvement planning. This indicates that there is transparency and accountability alongside the involvement of the school governing bodies at the schools.

(b) School Governing Bodies' Active Participation in the Implementation of National Education Standard 18: School Leadership

Just like with National Education Standard 17, another quantitative data set was collected from head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of departments, BoGs from the community and prefects on National Education Standard 18 (school leadership), particularly on display of SGBs fulfilled roles in the implementation of the National Education Standard. Aspects of National Education Standard 18 were used to gather data on the objective. Qualitative data was also collected on the same aspect of the targeted objective. The following results were acquired as it is shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4 : Data on the Involvement of School Governing Bodies in the Implementation of National Education Standard 18 - School**

**Leadership**

S/N	Component of Education Standard 18	A		U		D		Null (n)	Totals	
		F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
1	H/teacher and senior staff effectiveness	136	83.9	9	5.6	16	9.9	1	161	99.4
2	Key staff priority of student education and welfare	116	71.6	7	4.3	9	5.6	30	132	81.5
3	Head teacher's relationship with the school stakeholders	141	87.1	15	9.3	6	3.8	0	162	100
4	Head teacher's ability to communicate with stakeholders on official matters	125	77.2	26	16.1	11	6.8	0	162	100
5	Head teacher's availability at School	128	79	19	11.7	15	9.2	0	162	100
6	Student respect for key staff	136	84	6	3.7	20	12.4	0	162	100
7	Supervision of teachers and necessary action by senior staff	125	77.2	17	10.5	16	9.9	4	158	97.5

**KEY**

SN	SA	A	U	D	SD	F	(n)	%
Serial number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Frequency	Null	Percentage

From Table 4.4, it can be seen that 83.9% of all the respondents in S/N 1 confirmed that head teachers and senior staff work effectively to improve the quality of education. Precisely 79% of all the respondents in S/N 5 felt that the head teacher is available at school most of the week. It was also found that above 72% of all the respondents in S/N 7 believed that senior staff supervise teachers and take action as necessary. Again, 71.6% of the total number of respondents in S/N 2 indicated that key staff prioritises student education and welfare. Similarly, evidence from qualitative interviews established that in all the participating schools, the PTA is involved in monitoring the teaching and learning process. Participants from all 7 schools mentioned having a team of BoG members who monitor lessons, take note of problems, if any and discuss with school heads to find the way forward. For instance, the P.T.A chairperson at school 'E' explained,

*...As committee members, we can check whether teachers are teaching as expected as well as their punctuality. In addition to that, we have been mandated to tell teachers to change if they do not observe punctuality because we want our children to be helped (P.T.A chairperson-school 'E', personal communication, July, 28, 2022).*

Responding to a question about parent involvement, the BoG chairperson for school 'G' concurred with chairperson at school 'E' by saying,

*Not necessarily parents coming but what I can say is that they choose the P.T.A...so this P.T.A always come to the school and go into every classroom to see how the teachers are teaching and how students are getting what teachers say, so, in so doing, I can say things are working (BoG chairperson –school 'E, personal communication, July 28, 2022).*

Still, on the same, another P.T.A. chairperson testified to parents' visits to school 'B' where parents come to get school reports about their ward's performance as well as to participate in discussions organised termly by the school. He said,

*Yes, parents are welcome here. For example, they are called to discuss some matters and to be told how their children are performing as well as to get their children's school reports every term (PTA chairperson- school 'B', personal communication, July 25, 2022).*

This shows that lessons and the learning process in general, are monitored at schools 'B', 'G' and 'E'. In addition to that, quantitative findings indicated that more than 77.2% of all the respondents in S/N 4 held the view that the head teacher can communicate with school stakeholders. However, during qualitative interviews some BoG members bemoaned selective communication and involvement. Data collected at school 'D' revealed that there is selective involvement of BoGs, depending on concerned matters. There were responses like:

*We are called upon by the school authorities to be part of some events that take place in the school...not all activities but some. For others, we are called to take part so that we can be the ones to communicate to our fellow members (BoG member- school 'D', personal communication, July 28, 2022).*

At school 'D' SGB members from the community admitted being involved in school matters but those from the student body expressed ignorance about most school matters especially, ensuring accountability. They also expressed a lack of active participation in developmental planning and financial activities in their schools. The evidence here indicates selective involvement. In a different instance, findings at school 'H' revealed that sometimes committee members are only involved when there are educational visitors at the school.

*... Sometimes they involve us when some visitors come to the school...to impress the visitors, but after that, they don't call us often (BoG member-school 'H', personal communication, August 16, 2022).*

This is expressive of dissatisfactory Bog involvement.

Apart from that, slightly over 87.1% of all the respondents in S/N 3 agreed that head teachers in schools under the ISEM project have a good working relationship with other school stakeholders and that accurately, 84% of all the respondents in S/N 6 indicated that students respect head teachers and senior staff.

(c) School Governing Bodies' Active Participation in the Implementation of National Education Standard 24: Management of Buildings and Facilities

In trying to evaluate if the SGBs play a vibrant role as they are expected, the researcher used the state of some matters concerning the SGBs in the sampled schools. Quantitative data was collected on the implementation of National Education Standard 24 (management of buildings and facilities), in order to assess whether SGBs demonstrate their designated mandate in fulfilling various tangible aspects of National Education Standard 24. Quantitative respondents included Head teachers, deputy head teachers, Quantitative data findings are shown in Table 4.5, followed by a combined explanation of quantitative and qualitative findings.

**Table 4.5: Data on Implementation of National Education Standard 24 - Management of Building and Facilities**

S/N	Component of Education Standard 24	A		U		D		Null (n)	Totals	
		F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
1	Infrastructure security, care & maintenance	90	55.6	10	6.2	62	38.3	0	162	100
2	Infrastructure quality	8	4.9	74	45.7	80	49.4	0	162	100
3	Classroom furniture Adequacy	106	65.4	12	7.4	44	27.1	0	162	100
4	Classrooms' size & Quality	118	72.9	8	4.9	36	22.2	0	162	100
5	Access to clean water	114	70.4	10	6.2	38	23.4	0	162	100
6	Latrine number, privacy & Hygiene	79	48.7	11	6.8	72	44.5	0	162	100
7	Access to Washrooms	60	37.1	19	11.7	63	51.2	0	162	100

**KEY**

SN	SA	A	U	D	SD	F	(n)	%
Serial number	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Frequency	Null	Percentage

Using statistics in Table 4.5, it can be reported that nearly 56% of all the respondents in S/N 1 established that active participation of SGBs is responsible for infrastructure security, care and maintenance in the participating schools. An insignificant number of 4.9% of all the respondents in S/N 2 indicated that there is high quality infrastructure in the schools. Similarly, it was qualitatively found that most schools have infrastructure that was built long ago but it is maintained. Similarly, qualitative data showed that only schools A, G, F and H

had disability-friendly infrastructure in line with the schools' guidelines and other requirements set out in the legislation and regulations. During interviews, a member of the student council at school 'B' made a suggestion on behalf of students with disabilities saying,

*...And for example, there was a question about disability friendly buildings, it would have been better if the buildings were built following their needs so that such people can be free to come and access education (Student BoG member-School 'B', personal communication, July 25, 2022).*

A BoG member at school 'E' was also quoted as saying,

*... Some of the school blocks are built on this site and others on that side according to the Ministry of Education guidelines. However, something on the part of disability did not go well because we did not consider how many disabled students were there as we did not have any of the time we were planning to build. We did not have disabled students at the time so we built according to the way things were at that time (BoG member-school 'E', personal communication, July 28, 2022).*

This indicates that what is set out in the legislation and regulations is partially implemented because those that are supposed to take the roles have not actively done so to produce expected results.

Apart from that, over 65% of all the respondents in S/N 3 confirmed that there was sufficient classroom furniture for students and teachers. Almost 73% of all the respondents in S/N 4 also agreed that the classrooms were of good quality and size. Above 70% of all the respondents in S/N 5 showed satisfaction with access to clean water in the participating schools. Close to 49% of all the respondents in S/N 6 agreed that the latrines were adequate

and hygienic in the participating schools, and only 37.1% of all respondents in S/N 7 confirmed that girls in the participating schools had access to a washroom. Qualitative data also showed less access to washrooms at the sampled schools. Four out of seven schools lacked washrooms. When interviewed, most participants, including some key leaders could not even tell what a washroom is. They mistook it for hand washing materials such as pails with dispensing taps. A governing body member from the student council at school 'B' lamented the lack of washrooms by saying,

*I would have loved if we had some rooms which we can use as change rooms when we are menstruating (BoG member-school 'B', personal communication, July 25, 2022).*

However, 38.3% of all the respondents in S/N 1 held conflicting views about the assumption that there was infrastructure security, care and maintenance in their schools. More than 49% of all the respondents in S/N 2 opposed the expectation that infrastructure is of good quality in the study's participating schools. Over 45% of all the respondents in S/N 6 rejected the assumption that latrines in the schools were adequate, provided privacy and were hygienic, and 51.2% of all the respondents in S/N 7, rejected the assumption that girls had access to a washroom in the schools.

#### 4.3.1.3 How Decentralisation of the Secondary School Education Sector is a Factor in the Implementation of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24, Concerning School Governance.

To assess the current performance of SGBs depending on what they are mandated to do in line with decentralisation in the implementation of National Education Standard 24,



quantitative and qualitative data was collected on the objective. For quantitative data, the researcher used various components of a decentralisation such as decision making, exercise of authority and lack of local initiative in a school context where SGB members were expected to demonstrate power through implementation of National Education Standard 17, 18 and 24. To validate the quantitative findings, qualitative data was also collected through interviews on the same objective from top most SGB representatives of the community and the student body. Aspects like SGBs school autonomy, lack of decentralisation and presence of political interference were used to evaluate decentralisation. Findings of quantitative data collected from all respondents (head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of departments, prefects, BoG members) through a closed-ended questionnaire as shown in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: How Decentralisation in the Secondary Education Sector is a Factor in the Implementation of National Education Standards**

**- School Governing Bodies**

S/ N	Component of Education Standard 24	A		U		D		Null	Totals	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	(n)	f	%
1	Decides for the school without fear	81	50	34	21.0	47	29	0	162	100
2	Make decisions without consulting the higher education offices	64	39.5	44	27.2	54	33.3	0	162	100
3	Disciplines teachers	83	51.2	38	23.5	41	25.3	0	162	100
4	Can hire and fire support staff	74	45.7	48	29.6	40	24.7	0	162	100
5	Develops school budgets	94	58	35	21.6	33	20.3	0	162	100
6	Decides how to spend resources	102	63	25	15.4	35	21.6	0	162	100
7	Decides how to build and Maintain school structures	112	69.1	24	14.8	26	16	0	162	100
8	Advises the school head in case of Challenges	80	49.3	35	21.6	47	29	0	162	100
9	Holds teachers accountable for poor performance in national examinations	86	53	31	19.1	45	27.8	0	162	100
10	Decides how to fundraise	94	58.1	33	20.4	35	21.6	0	162	100

11	Provides incentives for teachers to work harder	77	47.5	51	31.5	34	21.01	0	162	100
12	Do not receive interference from local politicians or higher education officers	102	63	24	14.8	36	22.2	0	162	100

**KEY**

SN	RI	A	U	D	F	(n)	%
Serial number	Respondents Involved	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Frequency	Null	Percentage

(a) School Governing Bodies' Autonomy in the Implementation of National Education Standards: School Governing Bodies.

Looking at Table 4.6, it can be seen that 50% of all the respondents in S/N1 confirmed that SGBs make decisions for the schools without fear. Over 39% of all the respondents in S/N 2 concurred with the expectation that SGBs have autonomy over decision-making without having to consult the higher education offices. Most of all the respondents in S/N 6 consented with 63% that SGBs can decide how to spend resources. Almost 70% of all the respondents in S/N 7 subscribed to the assumption that SGBs decide how to build and maintain school structures. Findings from interviews with the SGBs at schools 'B' and 'H' revealed a lack of autonomy over decision-making by the school governing bodies in the schools. Interviewees from the BoG explained that the hierarchy of authority in the Ministry of Education delays feedback on proposed developmental projects resulting in dragging or failed implementation of the projects. In part, the qualitative evidence showed that there was lack of decentralisation. A BoG chairperson from schools 'B' and 'H' wished that decision-making and prioritisation of developmental projects should be left in the hands of local leaders other than the higher education offices. A participant from school 'B' explained,

*.... We are better placed to know the problems faced in this school because we are the ones that stay here. The government authorities in the higher offices should hear from us. They should not direct what should be done but can just give guidance on what we have decided to do (BoG member-school 'B', Personal communication, July 25, 2022).*

This shows that the school governing bodies wish for more authority over decisions despite quantitatively indicating that they are free to do most things at the schools. The difference between the quantitative and qualitative data could mean that the authority is not enough to guarantee the expected implementation of national education standards. The difference can be traced to the failure of the school governing bodies to quantitatively show the extent of authority that they have in the schools because the questionnaires were closed-ended. As such, they could not give room for explanation. Despite the desire for full autonomy over decisions, the participants expressed fear for the financial responsibility of fully funding developmental projects at the local level, should changes be effected.

#### (b) Decentralisation -Exercise of Power

More than 58% of all the respondents in S/N 10 acknowledged that 47 SGBs can decide how to fundraise. The only problem that was revealed by the qualitative interviews was that the schools lacked local financial initiative such that they had an impoverished financial ability. School Governing Bodies explained that effective management of buildings and facilities is not possible because of lack of enough funding from the government. For instance, already molded bricks for projects were losing their usability due to a lack of funding from donors or the government at school 'B'. During the interviews, BoG representatives at school 'G' kept complaining about the lack of donor funding even after they had said that their schools had fundraising projects like maize gardens.

In continuation, a significant number of 51.2% of all respondents in S/N 3 held the view that SGBs can discipline teachers. Close to 46% of all the respondents, in S/N 4, endorsed that

SGBs can hire and fire support staff. Accurately, 58% of all the respondents indicated that SGBs can develop school budgets in S/N 5. Nearly 50% of all the respondents in S/N 8 accepted that SGBs advise school heads in case of challenges. Precisely 53% of all the respondents in S/N 9 settled for SGBs' ability to hold teachers accountable in case of poor performance in national examinations. Above 47.5% of all the respondents in S/N 11 approved that SGBs provide incentives for teachers to work harder. Finally, 63% of all respondents in S/N 12 assented that SGBs do not receive interference from local politicians or higher education offices. Apart from the quantitative findings above, qualitative data was also collected on the same objective.

#### **4.4 Chapter Summary**

The chapter has presented comprehensive statistical and text study results shown in detailed data tables that specify categories of respondents, frequencies, percentages, serial numbers of each category, null responses, respondents involved in data collection in each category and the total number of respondents in each category. The chapter is also inclusive of some sketchy explanations about the calculated results.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the overall and detailed research results discussion. The discussion is organised in such a way that it gives a complementary analysis and synthesis of both quantitative and qualitative results under each objective. It is meant to examine how the implementation of leadership standards 17, 18 and 24 is advancing school governance in Malawian secondary schools in the Central Education Division (CWED). Arguments will be raised based on the findings of the study concerning how school governing bodies understand education standards 17, 18 and 24, concerning school governance; the extent to which school governing bodies are involved in the implementation of education standards 17, 18, and 24; and whether decentralisation of the secondary education sector is a factor to the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24. The discussion is mostly aligned with the argument that many factors affect the achievement of National Education Standards at various levels of school, such as school principals and staff who do not understand how to meet standards in a better direction, financial problems to support fulfillment of the standards and insufficient facilities and infrastructure issues that require government intervention in implementing NES that have not reached national standard (Sasongko & Sahono, 2018). It is also based on a new approach in educational governance that is essentially based on the increasing complexity of governance arrangements, a rise in the number of stakeholders and the use of evaluation as well as accountability data (Burns & Koster, 2016). The discussion also aligns the study with Goal Theory which states that motivation and performance are higher when individuals set specific goals when goals are difficult but accepted, and when there is feedback on performance (Armstrong, 2009).

## 5.2 Discussion

### *5.2.1 How School Governing Bodies Understand National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24, Concerning School Governance*

The findings of most of the studies reviewed for this study including one conducted by (Lucas and Galafa, 2018) in Malawi, indicate that there are significant challenges to good school governance due to a lack of understanding of training content, assigned roles, and responsibilities outlined for school stakeholders in leadership positions as they govern schools. In trying to assess the understanding of the National Education Standards by school governing bodies, in this study, data was collected on National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24 concerning information school governing bodies get from relevant authorities in the schools. Relatedly, awareness of National Education Standards as well as roles and responsibilities by students, parents, school governing bodies and village heads was used to measure understanding because 'understanding' in itself is abstract and does not have specific units of measurement.

#### 5.2.1.1 Understanding of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24 by School Governing Bodies

The EESSA project report (2018) recommends improving the quality and availability of data from secondary schools for use in monitoring capacity and quality, so that new investment in secondary education is based on verifiable performance indicators. Findings from questionnaires used in this study revealed that apart from their first orientation, school governing bodies in the sampled schools get adequate information about National Education Standards. An analysis of quantitative data showed that key school leaders highly share



information about National Education Standards. There was a high response rate on: students' knowledge ability about national education standards (65%), how key school authorities share information about education standards, roles and responsibilities with parents (61%), school governing bodies (close to 62%) and village heads (50%). High knowledge ability entails a high understanding of the education standards and the roles as well as responsibilities attached to them. A high understanding of standards, roles and responsibilities gives insight on what is involved and its importance. It therefore, leads to high internalisation and ownership of the specified performance standards set by the Ministry of Education resulting in their implementation and in return, advanced school governance. This is in line with Goal Theory which states that clear goals and appropriate feedback motivate employees (Latham & Locke, 1990). Specifically, Goal Theory states, for example, that telling someone to "try hard" or "do their best" is less effective than saying "try hard to get more than 80% correct (Latham & Locke, 1990).

In addition to selecting the right goals, one should listen to feedback to gauge the quality of progress. Feedback also allows for clarifying people's expectations and adjusting the difficulty of their goals (Latham & Locke, 1990).

However, the findings are unlike those of earlier studies by Sumy and Gridharan (2016); Rangongo (2011); Mestry (2006); Kandie (2017) and Kalowafumbi (2013) which indicated that school governing bodies lacked understanding of some aspects of school governance as well as, lack of knowledge and skills about the processes and procedures. The studies which were conducted in Bangladesh, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Malawi, respectively,

showed that the lack of understanding resulted in incompetence in interpreting school Acts, weak monitoring and evaluation systems, lack of communication on organisational strategies, absence of performance standards and corruption.

#### 5.2.1.2 Understanding of School Visions and National Education Policies by School Stakeholder

In education, National Education Standards look at the extent to which the school community has a clear sense of direction and shares a common set of values (MOEST, 2015). School stakeholders in school leadership positions need to understand school policies and visions which define what type of education should be achieved for a particular society at a particular time. As such, there is a need for care and continuous follow-up for a policy to be implemented and its impact to be measured (Mekango, 2013).

In this study, quantitative responses collected from all respondents in this study confirmed that there is a high understanding of national education policies and school visions by students, parents, school governing bodies and village heads. According to Marzano (2003), in the context of school improvement, policy can be viewed as the implementation framework that guides the action of all that are involved in the life of a school. Concerning policy implementation, Hopkins (2001) states that, "policy cannot be mandating what matters; it is implementation at the local and school level that dominates outcomes". By groups, response rates were calculated as follows: 84% (students), 70% (parents), 74% (school governing bodies) and 67.3% (village heads). This suggests that if SGBs get information about School Visions, National Education Policies and National Education

Standards 17, 18, and 24, their understanding of the various aspects of the standards and leadership is broadened to actively participate in the implementation of the set standards. Quon (2018) states that good Governance focuses on three interrelated areas: performance orientation; openness, transparency and integrity; and effective collaboration. The high response rates, therefore, suggest undoubted understanding which is necessary for quality performance and internalisation of goals. It also enables them to monitor and practice transparency and accountability, collaboration, and decentralised school governance. As a result, performance becomes synonymous with goal-directed action as well as success (Olusila, 2011; Godlovitch, 1993).

The setting of targets in the form of leadership standards; the motivation of implementers by training them in content and involving them in the implementation of set leadership standards 17, 18 and 24 as well as the concern with implementation, are related to the study's research problem as well as the Goal Theory that was employed for data analysis. Goal Theory replicates quality assurance in terms of setting standards, monitoring outcomes for compliance with the standards and enforcing standards where there is non-compliance (MOEST, 2015).

Contrary to the findings that school governing bodies are aware of school visions and education policies discussed in this study; over half of the SGB representatives that were interviewed failed to explain their school's vision or National Education Policies except for the Re-admission Policy. The SGBs could only explain activities that are expected in line with the implementation of school vision and some education policies such as taking care of

their school environments, tree planting/protecting the trees/watering/planting grass to prevent runoff without relating them to a particular policy or National Education Standards. Only two SGB members ably demonstrated knowledge of their school vision and one education policy while most of them could not reproduce the real words of their school visions or education policies. When asked if they have ever heard about what was being asked, they admitted that they did and know what was being talked about only that they could not remember the exact words.

Surprisingly, some of those that failed to recall the required information were executive members of BoGs as was the case at school 'H' and school 'F'. Further probing into the SGBs' level of understanding of education standards 17, 18 and 24 by school governing bodies unveiled that SGBs had a problem of failure to relate what they practice to specific National Educational Standards.

### 5.2.1.3 Training of School Governing Bodies

#### *(a) Lack of Training*

The shift from centralised to decentralised school governance and management in schools, demands that school governors, principals and educators develop a wide range of skills and capacity to deal with complex issues and tasks that they are expected to fulfil (Van Wyk, 2004). Contrary to this expectation, researchers such as Galafa (2018); Ndiangui (2013) and Rangongo (2011) found that lack of training, orientation or inadequate training was the major challenge in the smooth and swift implementation of policies and projects, management of

funds and performance of SGB's roles and responsibilities in Malawi, Kenya and South Africa.

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative findings highly indicated that school governing bodies were trained or inducted beforehand. The trainings can thus, be said to have prepared the school governing bodies for their designated roles and responsibilities. It is argued that high-performing educational systems have focused on transferring skills and developing these practices through training models that are consistent and aligned with them by combining training and a process of induction to designated posts (OECD, 2013).

*(b) Inadequate Training*

Another point of concern on training and preparation of SGBs' for maximum functionality is 'training duration'. Lucas and Galafa (2018) identified incompetence emanating from poor training to be among major causes of challenges facing schools. Similarly, qualitative data collected through interviews in this study established that some SGBs had been given too much information on the training day such that they could not properly recall what they were trained in. One interviewee openly complained that they were trained the whole day such that she could not recall the National Education Standards they were trained in one by one. This verifies the problem that was raised by some SGBs in South Africa that a one-day training workshop given to SGBs on the inception day is experienced as a window dressing (Rangongo, 2011; Van Wyk, 2004). This shows that too much content given out at once has contributed to lack of internalisation of and reproduction of terminology used for NES/ education policies or school visions by school governing bodies.

*(c) School Leaders Training and Acquaintance with Roles and Responsibilities*

OECD (2013) links expected progress in the functionality of school governing bodies to a precise definition of the responsibilities associated with school leadership. However, research findings by Wamba (2015) in a study conducted in Mzuzu revealed that in Malawi, both pre-service and in-service training for head teachers, management committee members and teachers were almost non-existent such that it was the commonest barrier to the achievement of the Ministry of Education's National Education Standards. Similar research findings were obtained by Rangongo (2011); Summy and Gridharan (2016); Mestry (2006) and Kandie (2017) in South Africa, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Kenya. The results indicated that school governing bodies and some head teachers were dysfunctional, corrupt or undemocratic due to lack of understanding of their responsibilities.

In this study, quantitative and qualitative data concurred that parents, village heads, P.T.A, mother groups and school governing bodies are conversant with their designated roles and responsibilities. Quantitative data showed 78.4% respondents' agreement on BoG members' knowledge about their roles and responsibilities. Interviews of SGB representatives highly indicated that P.T.A's, Mother groups and BoGs know their duties in the teaching and learning process, ensuring that girls' welfare, fundraising and school budgets. Fortunately, the above findings show that school leaders were prepared in advance for their roles and responsibilities.

*(d) Language Barriers to Training*

To date, quality of education indices are linked to policy factors (OECD, 2012; Hoareau et al., 2013). Among the many challenges that are being faced by the education sector, specifically, the information management professionals, is the role of English language as a barrier in reducing research productivity (Tariq et al., 2016). Despite the fact that BoG representatives in this study got information about School Visions, National Education Standards, National Education Policies and that they are able to demonstrate what they had grasped or are implementing practical aspects of the National Education Standards their understanding of the same is not denotative; it is theoretically hindered by their linguistic failure to reproduce the required terminologies. Their failure to explain the Education Policies or National Education Standards can, therefore, be taken to be a question of English language and not failure to understand. Personal verification of training manuals used in *PHASE I* of the ISEM project indicated that the manuals were written English language (MOEST, 2019). The fact that the initial facilitation guides were written in English means that they were supposed to be used in the language in which they were written. However, interaction with school governing body members from the community established that most of them were not comfortable with English because they asked to be interviewed in their native language (Chichewa). The language problem found in this study is similar to what was found by Rangongo (2011) in a study involving South African BoGs. What is worrisome is that any limited capacity of school governors often leads to financial mismanagement or misappropriation of funds such as embezzlement, fraud or theft (Mestry, 2004; Mestry, 2006).

## ***5.2.2 Evaluating the Extent to which School Governing Bodies are Involved in the Implementation of Education Standards 17, 18 and 24***

Ideally, an efficient school is where the interaction between different stakeholders is cordial and mutually reinforcing so that the teachers are happy to teach, parents are willing to send their children to school, and children enjoy the learning process (Mastercard Foundation, 2018). According to Hopkins (2004) on effective schools, there is strong evidence that success is associated with a sense of identification and involvement that extends behind the teaching staff.

### **5.2.2.1 School Governing Bodies ‘Active Participation’ in the Implementation of National Education Standard 17: School Governance**

#### ***(a) Involvement of School Governing Bodies (BoG)***

The Malawi Education Sector Analysis (2019a) indicated that school governance and management was a problematic priority area for improvement. However, in this study, data collected through quantitative questionnaires on the involvement of school governing bodies in the implementation of National Education Standard 17, revealed that a high number of respondents agreed that BoGs take an active role. For example, respondents highly established that BoGs participate actively in budgeting for all school funds (52%), partner with key school governors and the local community (69.2%), play an active role in school improvement planning (over 69%), highly attend BoG meetings which are purposeful and well documented for transparency and accountability (69.2%). Participation in school budgeting and school improvement planning incorporates the 'Voice' of the SGBs in decision-making about the schools and allows for presentation of individual educational



needs. Specifically, participation in fundraising indicates that there is goal ownership by the school governing bodies and their willingness to support school development. In addition, it shows partnership and effective communication. Goal ownership by all stakeholders, partnership and effective communication consequently, results in implementation.

Furthermore, SGBs have the responsibility to raise school standards (Ford, 2013). The involvement of parents in school management is argued to bring solutions to challenges since there is a strong partnership between school, community and family (Msiska, 2022). Based on the PISA (2015) Collaborative Problem Solving Framework, collaborated stakeholders must check the insufficiency of the following: infrastructure, teacher performance, teacher discipline, quality teaching, and teacher absenteeism as they affect day to day running of the school. This involves pupils, parents, members of the local community and SGB members who serve to represent others in school matters. For example, in the quest to improve education quality, countries have Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) enshrined in their national constitutions and various pieces of legislature, which include educational policies (Msiska, 2022).

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2017) necessitates stakeholder involvement as crucial in the prevention of misconceptions around roles and responsibilities. According to Hopkins (2002), coordination leads to successful implementation of reform programs. In this study, qualitative evidence collected from selected BoG representatives in all the participating schools through interviews showed that SGBs work hand in hand with key school authorities in matters concerning the schools. This is evidence that the SGBs

including those from the student body, take part in school governance activities that require their representation. The interviews strongly revealed that head teachers practiced transparency and accountability evidenced by effective communication with parent school stakeholders and documented BoG meeting minutes on all matters affecting schools. This denotes a great extent of involvement of school governing bodies in the implementation of leadership standards 17, 18 and 24. School governing stakeholder involvement is an essential aspect of Goal Theory as well as effective school governance, which requires that there should be a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities and a right balance between central and local direction, setting of concrete objectives and priorities for their education system and engagement of stakeholders in the process (Armstrong, 2009; OECD, 2015). It is therefore, capable of improving school governance.

However, contrary to the great extent of involvement, of SGBs discussed earlier on in this study, qualitative data from interviews partly revealed that there is some selective involvement especially, on the part of students and community school governors in some schools. Student school governors in some schools denied being involved in school budgets while some SGB members from the community complained that they are not invited to take part in some activities that take place at the schools such as school budgets. When pupils are less involved, their attitudes to school will likely be much more negative (Mekango, 2013). Moreover, it deprives student governors of the opportunity to be full and active participants in all aspects of democratic life including the ability to think critically, a sense of efficacy, commitment to compassionate action, and a desire to actively participate in political life through engagement in local decision-making processes, lobbying and voting (Koliba, 2000).

In addition, a respondent at school 'G', indicated that some activities in the schools do not draw participants from all BoG members. The respondent explained that those invited are the ones who brief the rest of the members that were not invited to attend such activities. Less extent of fulfillment of requirement for set standards contradicts the requirements of Goal Theory. In this case, some key school authorities in some schools do not involve school governing bodies in the implementation of some aspects of National Education Standards. If not checked in time, side-lined student governors or SGBs from the community may become barriers to the attainment of goals when innovations are introduced or they may withdraw their initial initiative and effort. The problem of lack of involvement is similar to what Taylor et al. (2012) found in an investigation on aspects of learning connected to successful learner outcomes, including institutional cooperation of parents in ten lower socioeconomic-status national schools under startling conditions, in South Africa. In the study, head teachers considered the involvement of the SGBs as interference. Such a situation may result in undemocratic leadership. However, the researcher's own experience in teaching attributed lack of involvement of community members in some activities as due to the participant limitation of the activities. Some activities demand that specific participants attend.

Considering the findings of the study by Taylor et al. (2012), the lack of involvement of students in school budgets in this study could be due to head teachers' resistance to change to involve students in school budgets because this was not the case in the past. However, from the researcher's own experience, the lack of involvement of all BoG members in some school activities could be because some meetings are meant for the topmost executive members and not for every member.

*(b) Involvement of School Governing Bodies (P.T.A) in Monitoring Lessons*

Community participation is significantly correlated to school community relations (Hamdan 2013). Most educationists have realised the significance and benefits of community participation in school education and also recognised community participation as one way of improving educational access and quality (Patel, 2021). Community-based approaches to educational development have the potential to enhance ownership, accountability, and efficiency (Patel, 2021). Community involvement in education facilitates the identification of community-specific education issues and informs the development of strategies to remove barriers to access and quality of education within a given community (Sharma et. al., 2014). Community members have the responsibility of supervising school administration such as attendance and punctuality of teachers, attendance of students, timely supply of textbooks, notebooks and other teaching materials, abolition of corporal punishment and physical and mental harassment, regular health check-ups for children and audit of financial grants (Patel, 2021). They also have the responsibility of guiding, advising, giving personal attention and demonstrating curiosity to help students (Patel, 2021).

In this study, evidence from qualitative interviews showed that in all the sampled schools the P.T.A. are involved in monitoring the teaching and learning process as one of their roles and responsibilities. Participants from all 7 schools confirmed that their schools have a team of BoG members who monitor lessons, take note of problems, if any and discuss with school heads to find a way forward. Similarly, quantitative findings indicated that SGBs in the schools are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in supervising and enforcing quality teaching and learning as well as, ensuring teacher accountability in collaboration with key

school leaders. Collaborative leadership between the community and professional school authorities is one of the requirements in the implementation of leadership standard 17. As such, high inclusion in the implementation of various leadership activities in this study denotes trust and goal ownership by the SGBs. It shows that implementers have accepted set goals and are eager to implement them resulting in successful school governance. Concerning school governance, this is in line with Goal Theory.

### *(c) Parent Involvement*

Parents are the first and most important teachers that children encounter and thus, their involvement in their children's education would accelerate and simplify learning, ultimately resulting in improved education outcomes (Moroni et al., 2015). Successful school managers and students have strong academic and social support from their involved parents (Durasic & Bunijevac, 2017; MoEST, 2019; Ng'ambi 2010). It is argued that parental involvement is an essential school element of successful schools (Chen, 2022). In addition to that, parents are a source of essential financial, social and psychological support to the students and schools, alike (Chen, 2022).

In this study, qualitative data from interviews with BoG members established that SGBs in the sampled schools do fundraise for their schools. Interviewees at the schools explained that parents make a 25% monetary contribution to school improvement and sometimes chiefs facilitate that parents contribute some money to pay piece workers instead of physically doing required work at the schools. Likewise, quantitative data collected in this study showed that SGBs participate actively in raising funds for the schools (over 55%) and communicate

effectively with all school stakeholders (48%). Fundraising by parents for their children's education is in line with the designated financial responsibilities of SGBs which are essential for the improvement of school governance. It is, therefore, in line with the implementation of NES 17 which, aim to improve school governance.

Accordingly, the interviews with SGB representatives revealed that parents in the sampled schools are allowed to visit the schools when they want. However, it was found that at school 'B' parents do come to get school reports on their wards' performance and to participate in discussions organised by the school on a timely basis. However, BoG chairpersons for schools A, G, D, E, F and H honestly explained during interviews that despite being welcome at the schools, individual parents do not come to the schools to enquire about their children's performance unless they are called by school authorities. Evidence from the schools showed that only P.T.A. members come to check the progress and performance of students in schools.

Some of the reasons associated with a lack of parental interest in their children's education include the parents, level of income, and parents' level of education (Chevalier et al., 2013; Anderson & Minke, 2007; Boulton, 2006). Low parental education not only denies the parents knowledge of raising children but also leads them to low-paying jobs, requiring them to work more hours than to commit themselves to their children's education. Yet such parents mostly tend to have more children who go to schools and require more of the parents' commitment (Oranga, Obuba & Boinett, 2022). It is believed that parents who lack information or understanding regarding the structure of the school and accepted channels of communication,

feel unwelcomed and that other school personnel hinder parental participation in their childrens' education (Winslow et al., 2013; Weiss et al., 2003).

Although parents and children are beneficiaries of education services, the accountability of these actors is important for the success of education improvement efforts (Baghdady & Zaki, 2019). For example, students are expected to fulfil school rules and regulations, and be present at school, whereas, parents must monitor the behaviours of their wards, or ensure that they go to school. Both parties also have to claim their educational rights in the education system and they should voice any concerns and raise any issue with the relevant authority (Baghdady & Zaki, 2019). Parents and students also need to complain in case of poor quality teaching and learning and hold accountable those responsible for it. Apart from that, parent-school engagement enhances parent-teacher communication resulting in cooperation between teachers and parents resulting in enhanced educational outcomes. As such, if parents do not avail themselves to fulfil their responsibilities, it suggests less implementation of their parental role. If parents are not interested in their children's education, they cannot support key school governors' efforts in improving educational performance. Most commonly, a lack of parental support makes it difficult for teachers to discipline learners (Milondzo, 2009). For example, a lack of coordinated efforts between parents and teachers leads to failure to trace learners' presence in school as well as their engagement in bad behaviours (Heystek & Paquette, 1999).

In Malawi, the minister of education, Agness Nyalonje, observed that there are increasing levels of indiscipline in schools which, originates from the learner's homes (Times 360

Hourly News report, 1st December, 2022). This would not have been the case had it been that parents and teachers were working hand in hand. Fortunately, she planned to solve the problem by working with communities and parents, showing that even higher educational leaders support the implementation of set leadership standards as per Goal Theory. Chombo (2020) recommends visits that will breed a collegial relationship for the identification and solution of problems as well as the implementation of improvement strategies. Family-school engagement can have positive impacts at the student, teacher, and school levels (Barton, Ershadi & Winthrop, 2021).

*(d) Involvement of School Governing Bodies (Fulfillment of their Roles  
- Organisation of Activities to Encourage Parent Participation)*

Qualitative findings from interviews established that SGBs annually hold various educational activities at the studied schools to encourage the participation of parents in their children's education. Among others, activities such as graduation and best performers' award ceremonies are organised termly and yearly, respectively, to give parents feedback as well as to motivate students. Common responses given by BoG representatives in all schools during interviews to the question about whether they organise activities to inform parents about what happens in the schools established that they do so. All respondents interviewed in all schools explained that every term, they organise a day for parents to come and get their children's school reports. Respondents mentioned activities such as graduation ceremonies for form four students where parents, community members and students from other classes are invited and award-giving ceremonies after end-of-term tests. Apart from encouraging parent involvement in their children's education, it also provides feedback to parents and guardians. Providing feedback to parents is in line with Goal Theory which guided the study as well as the



responsibilities of SGBs (Armstrong, 2009). It encourages the engagement of the parents in their childrens' education. It also motivates students to achieve good school outcomes which reflect good school governance. The results in this study are also consistent with evidence from Pakistan where providing parents with information about schools and students' test scores through report cards improved the test scores, increased primary school enrolments and reduced educational costs for private schools (Andrabi, Das & Khwaja, 2015).

*(e) Involvement of School Governing Bodies – Attendance of BoG Meetings*

It is also important for the school board to organise meetings and papers for meetings efficiently, as well as provide information and procedural advice; ensure that decisions are properly taken and clearly understood, as well as ensure that minutes are clear and used as set out points for action (Chombo, 2020).

Data collected in this study established that BoGs highly attend meetings, and have regular and well-documented minutes (69.2%). High attendance of BoG meetings by SGBs is an indication that SGBs partake in discussing school development issues for the betterment of the schools. In addition to organisation and attendance of BoG meetings, the study found that there was proper documentation of meetings by responsible personnel such as secretaries and SGB members at meetings is essential for 'feedback' processes, continuity and accountability since the documentation indicates a true reflection of what transpires during the meetings and the status of matters in reality. The use of feedback is in line with Goal Theory (Armstrong, 2009).

After weighing the evidence of involvement against that of lack of involvement, data indicates that the school governing bodies are involved more than they are not in the implementation of NES 17, 18 and 24. Hanna and Latchem (2001) argue that one of the crucial qualities of transformational leadership necessary for the success of any programme is the ability to form strong leadership teams and to engender learning within and across the organisation. As such, high inclusion in various school leadership activities suggests a great extent of involvement of SGBs in the implementation of NES 17, 18 and 24. The involvement of SGBs is key in the attainment of improved school governance because it builds trust and goal ownership in the SGBs. The implied result is successful school governance.

#### 5.2.2.2 School Governing Bodies ‘Active involvement’ in the implementation of National Education Standard 18: School Leadership

##### *(a) School Governing Bodies’ Active Involvement – Partnership with Key School Authorities*

According to Cole (2007), the community plays an important role in the education system. Students, teachers and parents agree that social support is essential for the success of the school and the student, especially in performance (Shukia, 2022). In this study, apart from the involvement of school governing bodies in the implementation of leadership standards 17, SGBs were involved in the implementation of NES 18. Findings showed that SGBs in the sampled schools work in partnership with key school authorities in fulfilling various school leadership roles and communicate effectively with other stakeholders. Respondents highly

(50%) agreed that SGBs make decisions in the schools. Similarly, qualitative findings indicated that SGB members from BOG and PTA are involved in school improvement planning. In addition to that, a high number of respondents confirmed that the SGBs can discipline teachers (over 51%) as well as, hire and fire support staff (close to 46%). This suggests that SGB members play a crucial role in the running of the school and in ensuring accountability at the schools.

*(b) School Governing Bodies' Active Involvement – Ensuring  
Accountability and Transparency*

In addition to involvement in school leadership roles discussed earlier, qualitative evidence from all interviewees showed that key school authorities in the sampled schools involve SGBs in their adherence to accountability and transparency procedures. Whenever school development purchases are made, communication is made; receipts are brought forward and shown to concerned BoG members thereby ensuring that financial and material resources are put to their intended use. Such transparency and accountability prevents corruption and misappropriation of resources by key decision-makers.

Apart from that, quantitative research respondents highly (53%), indicated that SGBs were able to hold teaching staff accountable for poor national examination results. They also highly (over 55%) indicated that BoGs take part in ensuring accountability of school funds and that they disseminate information about expenditures to other community stakeholders. Effective communication and collaboration within the entire stakeholder system are important for meaningful participation (Livala et al., 2023). Holding teachers accountable

helps to enhance the teaching and learning process for high school outcomes. Similarly, disseminating information is important in ensuring accountability, transparency, awareness and building trust for effective working relationships.

### 5.2.2.3 School Governing Bodies' Active Involvement in the implementation of National Education Standard 24: Management of Buildings and Facilities

#### *(a) Infrastructure and Facilities Management*

SGBs represent the school community in ensuring proper maintenance of buildings and other infrastructure facilities such as gardens, fences, and availability of separate toilets for girls and boys, availability of drinking water, and availability of libraries and laboratories (Patel, 2021). In this study, proper maintenance of buildings and facilities was established when findings showed that respondents highly assented to the availability of infrastructure security, adequate classrooms of good size and quality, clean water supply and an adequate number of hygienic latrines that offer privacy, in the schools with 55.5%, 65.4%, 72.9%, 70.4% and 48.7%, respectively. Availability of classroom furniture, proper maintenance and availability of a clean water supply in the schools, is related to the implementation of education standard 24 under school governance. The high response rate, therefore, suggests that school governing bodies actively practice and implement proper management of buildings and facilities in the schools.

However, in the study, the SGBs implementation of NES 24 was called into question when unlike quantitative data, qualitative data revealed that some of the sampled schools had no washrooms for girls and well-built, disability-friendly facilities. The lack of washrooms in the schools was common across the sampled schools to the extent that some respondents did not

know what a washroom was. Out of all the respondents, the lack of washrooms in the schools was verified by 51.2% of respondents. This shows that the responsibility of school governing bodies is fallible in some way. A student governor at school 'B' greatly bemoaned the lack of washrooms for girls and disability-friendly facilities on behalf of other students. According to the respondents, the schools do not have enough money to build the required structures. It was also found that the school governing bodies are not well informed about the need for washrooms. Such a situation entails that in some schools; the management of buildings and facilities is not fully understood and implemented regarding National Education Standard 24.

Based on the evidence under objective two, SGB representatives in the sampled schools are involved in most of the schools' activities than they are not. Among others, it was found that they are mostly involved in decision-making for school development, school budgets, fundraising for the school and monitoring of teaching and learning. Therefore, it can be said that school governing bodies in the schools that participated in the study are involved in the implementation of National Education Standards to a great extent.

*(b) School Governing Bodies' Involvement in the Implementation of  
Water Conservation Policy*

As a country, Malawi is currently facing several problems and challenges in water resources management (GoM, 2013). These include serious water resources degradation in catchments, inadequate water supply and sanitation services coverage, increasing water demand of, lack of inadequate promotion of hygiene and sanitation, and extreme climatic events such as excess precipitation and inadequate rainfall (GoM, 2013). As such, the Government of

Malawi recognises that water, like any other natural resource, should be developed and managed to satisfy the present social and economic needs without sacrificing the aspirations of future generations (GoM, 2013). The Government, therefore, ensures that the set standards and guidelines advocated by the water conservation policy are adhered to in the whole process of conservation, management, development, provision and utilisation of water resources, and disposal of wastewater (GoM, 2013). This does not leave out schools as institutions. Based on responses given by SGB interviewees from both the community and students' bodies in this study, it was revealed that school governing bodies in some schools engage in activities that help to conserve natural resources and planting trees surrounding their schools to control runoff, soil erosion and wind erosion. They also indulge in sanitation and hygiene practices as they manage their water sources for prolonged use. This shows that the SGB's are involved in the implementation of education policies on environmental conservation, such as the Water Conservation Policy. Involving local people in decision-making makes education more responsive to demands (Yamada, 2014). As such high involvement of school governing bodies in various school management activities, as seen in this study, implies implementation of what is required under National Education Standard 18: School leadership.

### ***5.2.3 Assessing if Decentralisation is a Factor in the Implementation of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24***

#### ***(a) Decentralisation***

Decentralisation is broadly understood as 'the transfer of public authority, resources, and personnel from the national level to sub-national jurisdictions' and is normally viewed as

falling into the political, administrative and fiscal spheres (O'Neil et al., 2014). Decentralised education systems are meant to ensure maximum standards, efficiency and stakeholder participation as opposed to centralised systems (Hanson, 1997). In theory, decentralisation shifts power and authority from the state at national level to school community at local level (Minnaar, 2009). In school, decentralisation is associated with democratic school governance. In many countries, legislation has decentralised huge powers and responsibilities to school governors and PTAs such that school heads now require a certain level of approval whether mere rubber stamping or in any other form before they can execute some responsibilities, something that is very uncomfortable to many of them (Supriadi, 2021). Democratic school governance is good for a school because it improves discipline, enhances productivity for both teachers and students, reduces conflict and secures the future existence of democracy (Backman & Trafford, 2007).

In Malawi, anecdotal evidence based on qualitative enquiries indicates that decentralisation appears to have improved community participation in education in Malawi (Chiweza, 2010). Kufaine and Mtapuri (2008) report that some communities have engaged in school feeding programme which have helped, in a way, to retain pupils in primary schools from research conducted by Kufaine (Kufaine, 2008). However, while some people support decentralisation as a better way to improve the educational system, others think otherwise, stating reasons for possible corruption, favouritism and diversion of funds under a decentralised system (Sineta, 2002). The Wallace Foundation (2009) condemns singlehanded school management by stating that effective school leaders should create opportunities for sharing authority broadly within their schools, to guide the learning agenda. Unfortunately, Waite (2001) observes that educational institutions are dominated by the Great Man/Woman Theory of Leadership,

especially in terms of management style. In governmental frameworks of large ministries such as education, the power and authority to decide on important matters are concentrated at the top of the hierarchy (Gamage & Zajda, 2015). Despite partial decentralisation in the secondary school subsector, institutional tensions and confusion over responsibilities between government units continue to hinder successful decentralisation regardless of a strong governance framework in place (USAID, 2016-2021). As such, directives, instructions and orders follow a top-down approach.

In trying to assess if decentralisation in the secondary education sector is a factor in the implementation of education standards, this study revealed that various SGB members are free to discharge their designated duties without interference or barriers. This was seen through quantitative data in which respondents highly (63%), established that SGBs do not work under the interference of politicians or higher education offices also highly ((50%) agreed that SGBs can decide for the school without fear . Evidence from SGB representatives showed that SGBs are free to fulfil their crucial designated roles without restriction or degradation. For example, interviewees who provided qualitative data acknowledged that SGBs are free to monitor the teaching and learning process in progress as part of ensuring accountability and transparency. Complementarily, qualitative findings indicated that key school authorities practice accountability and transparency when dealing with school finances and donor aid.

The above findings corroborated with quantitative results in which respondents highly (58%); confirmed that SGBs fulfil their key duties in school resource management including:



developing school budgets deciding how to spend resources (63%); deciding how to build and maintain school structures (slightly more than 61%); disciplining teachers (over 51%); holding teachers accountable for poor performance in national examinations (53%) and deciding how to fundraise (more than 58%). The findings are in line with key dimensions of decentralisation in Malawi. Davies et al. (2003) outlines key dimensions of decentralisation in education planning and management in Malawi as; work culture, accountability, accurate and well disseminated information, provision of levels of resources and sustainability. In addition, Kandie (2017) states that the ability to work in teams, participate in decision-making processes, and obey the decisions made by the majority while preserving and respecting the rights of the minority in a school situation results in powers and responsibilities being distributed more equally between all the stakeholders of the school. The findings are therefore, characteristic of decentralisation in school.

#### *(b) Community Participation*

Community participation in school based governance is a formal change of administration structures and a type of decentralisation that distinguishes the individual school as essential unit of progress and depends on the redistribution of basic leadership expert through which upgrades in schools may be animated and continued (Gamage, 2013). In order for power and authority to be displayed by the community, formal structures such as ‘councils’ or ‘board’ consisting of school principals, teacher representatives, parents, community and students are created at school level so that they can be involved in decision making (Brown, 2014). The devolved power and the creation of the structures for stakeholder participation foster autonomy, flexibility, productivity and accountability (Gamage, 2013). As such, in several major systems of the contemporary world, devolution of authority and provision for

community participation in school governance has become a priority (Chapman & Boyd, 2012). Stakeholders' participation in the school system is underpinned by the ideals of democracy which advocates for representation in any system of governance and if quality education is to be enhanced, various school stakeholders need to be regularly communicated and brought on board to play significant roles in school management (Carbado, 2016). In this study, research findings showed that SGBs participate in various school leadership and management processes. For example, BoG members participate in developing school budgets (58%), decide how to spend resources (63%). Again, qualitative findings from BoG members indicated that they communicate with each other about what transpired at executive meetings.

Apart from that, qualitative evidence from the sampled schools indicated that SGBs from BoG mostly participate in school development and management decisions. Such stakeholders' participation in the school system is underpinned by the ideals of democracy which advocates for representation in any system of governance and if quality education is to be enhanced, various school stakeholders need to be regularly communicated and brought on board to play significant roles in school management (Carbado, 2016). Community participation provides community school leaders with the experience and background necessary for pre-planning and post-planning roles (Gamage & Zajda, 2015). High involvement in key issues of school management therefore, shows that the community plays a great role in school leadership as it is the case with other school authorities for the achievement of a common goal.

*(c) Autonomy– Power and Authority over Decision-making*

Education governance and school autonomy are a pair of mutually linked concepts that have involved various relationships, including the relationship between schools and government and society and the complex relationship between the school's administration (comprising the school leaders, teachers, and other staff) and students and even parents (Fan & Zhang, 2020). Nowadays, education governance is supposed to use a modern school system that works under democratic supervision in compliance with autonomy, the law and the engagement of other stakeholders in society (Fan & Zhang, 2020). This is in line with decentralisation which involves the devolution of power, authority and accountability from a centralised structure (government) to a decentralised structure at a local level such as school (Minnar 2009). The shifting authority from the central government to the school level empowers the school stakeholders in school decisions (Supriadi et al., 2021). The aim is to free schools from their over-dependence on the government, achieve autonomy and realise shared governance among teachers, students, parents and professional educational organisations to highlight the agency of schools, increase the level of professionalism in their operations, and better meet the student's educational needs and facilitate their development (Chu, 2004). As such, the government must delegate authority to schools; the schools must undergo internal decentralisation as well and create a mechanism that allows the principal, teachers, parents, students and community residents to directly participate in the school's decision-making process (Dimmock, 1993). However, USAID (2016-2021) states that district budgets are still allocated by the central government with little local input, political patronage and lack of supervision have led to a cycle of poor performance by public servants, and crucial information is not shared between levels of government.

In this study, respondents highly confirmed (50%) that SGBs take part in making decisions for the schools after being asked how school leadership works. Despite high respondent rates showing that SGBs are free to allocate finances or build infrastructure, school stakeholders have to wait for a long time to get final decisions, feedback, direction or funding to implement development projects because they do not have the authority over decision making. Evidence gathered from the interviews in the study bore complaints about the hierarchy of authority which delays the authorisation of some developmental projects. Almost all interviewees bemoaned being continuously referred from one office of higher authority to another for key decisions, as the time frame for developmental projects elapses without implementation. Likewise, quantitative evidence obtained on school governing bodies' autonomy over decision making indicated that only 39% of respondents confirmed that SGBs can make decisions in the school without having to consult the higher education offices. Despite having the mandate to hire and fire support staff, only 46% of the respondents agreed that they could do so. It was also observed that just over 47% of the respondents confirmed that school governing bodies provide incentives for teachers to work harder. This shows that the school governing bodies in the sampled schools do not have full autonomy over decision making. It suggests that the final decisive 'Power' over decision-making still resides in the Ministry of Education headquarters or Education Divisions. Lack of full school-level autonomy in this study is similar to what Ainley and Makenzie (2000) found in their study in Australia. Failure to fully involve stakeholders in decision-making by governance and management systems is an aspect of centralisation (Rado, 2010). Centralisation is understood as a barrier to the effective implementation of desired learning standards because decisive authority gets concentrated at the top of the hierarchy of authority in a system (Burns & Koster, 2016). In this way, it does not allow for equal sharing of decision-making power and sometimes, even responsibilities. Unfortunately, one of the elements of modern education

governance proposes that leaders should focus on processes and not structures because the concentration of decisive authority at the top frustrates the efforts of the lower levels (Burns & Koster, 2016). It affects the timely or even the implementation of national education standards in the schools since school governing bodies have to act only after being given the final permission on some important matters affecting the schools. Similarly, in line with the Goal Theory, the expectation is that governments will establish strict regulations and restrictions on school autonomy as part of the delegation process and tend to focus more on the performance and outputs resulting from the decentralisation and school autonomy (Gunnarson et al, 2008), and have strict performance indicators and goals for school's operations (Smyth, 2014). In line with the requirements of Goal Theory, this is negative 'feedback' that needs action.

Much as quantitative findings showed lack of autonomy over the activities stipulated in the preceding paragraphs, it showed greater SGBs autonomy over most activities. The difference, however, could be attributed to the fact that the respondents' earlier indication that there is freedom to discharge various duties without interference came out of closed questionnaires which could not give the respondents an opportunity to express the degree of their freedom to do things. The difference could also be due to what O'Neil et al., (2014) state that despite the rhetorical commitment to democratic decentralisation, the establishment of local authorities has been characterised by an absence of unity of purpose, poor coordination among central government ministries, by resistance, subversion and delays, and by the informal and formal centralisation of power and functions. The final view about evidence from this study is therefore, that despite having a wide variety of school activities, school governing bodies fail to realise some planned implementation of some important requirements under NES because

of delays or lack of permission from higher authorities. As such, it can be concluded that decentralisation in the secondary school subsector is a factor in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24.

*(d) Autonomy – Local Initiative*

School autonomy also involves school improvement (Honig & Rainey, 2012). Under the reforms of decentralisation and in order to make up or lack of funds or cuts in budgets, liberalization or privatization and deregulation are employed to tackle the basic commitments (Kameshwara et al., 2023). Community- based financing performance financing and public-private partnerships are sometimes used to cover the underlying logic of de-financing or financial delegation. It is believed that the local initiative is ominously reduced when total educational funding is dependent on the central government's budget Hanson (1997). However, when central control is minimised, a great reservoir of initiative and wisdom is harnessed since decentralisation recognises working with personnel at all levels (Gamage & Zajda, 2015). One of the prominent implications of decentralisation for schools worldwide is that governments have shifted the responsibility of financial management and supplementing the school's income to school governing bodies (Minnaar, 2009).

In this study, however, qualitative findings indicated that there is an overreliance on government/ donor funding in the sampled schools to the extent that implementation is halted. Study findings from interviews showed a lack of essential infrastructure in the schools under study. A probe into the cause revealed that the lack of essential infrastructure in the schools under study is a massive financial challenge emanating from the absence/ delayed/

slashed government funding. This was the case even in the schools which had local fundraising projects such as vegetable gardens and maize gardens. From the explanations of BoG representatives, it was seen that financial local initiatives in the concerned schools were not vibrant. If the secondary school subsector was fully decentralised, a local initiative to fundraise would have been higher than it is, currently. This implies that leaders' performance in the implementation of standards 17, 18 and 24, at the local level, is linked to decentralisation as one of the factors.

### **5.3 Chapter summary**

The chapter focused on a discussion of quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study. Quantitative data meanings were collated with qualitative data meanings to arrive at common meanings for both sets of data. The collated meanings are presented in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a brief background to the study, a summary of the findings on each objective, conclusions, research recommendations and suggestions for further research.

### **6.2 Brief background**

This study identified that despite efforts by the Malawi government to enact several school governance policy frameworks, the secondary school sub-sector still faces multiple challenges regarding school governance (MOEST, 2019; MOEST, 2015). One of the initiatives that were introduced to deal with the school governance problems in secondary schools in Malawi was the development of NES, including those of leadership namely, 17, 18 and 24. The study attempted to address three specific objectives: To investigate how school governing bodies in CWED understand national education standards 17, 18 and 24, concerning school governance; To evaluate the extent to which school governing bodies in CWED are involved in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24 and; To assess if decentralisation of the secondary education sector is a factor in the implementation of the education standards 17, 18 and 24.

To examine the problem, the study adopted a pragmatic paradigm and the mixed methods design as the framework for the study. In terms of data collection, the study engaged 7 head teachers; 7 deputy head teachers; 21 heads of departments, 106 prefects and 21 school governing body members from selected schools that fall under the ISEM project in the



Central West Education Division. The data was collected through a questionnaire and interviews.

### **6.3 Summary of the findings**

#### ***6.3.1 How School Governing Bodies Understand National Education Standards***

The analysis of data on the above first objective of this study confirmed that students, parents, school governing bodies and village heads get information on leadership standards 17 (school governance), 18 (school leadership) and 24 (Management of Buildings and Facilities). It was also revealed that students, parents, school governing bodies and village heads are knowledgeable about their school visions and education policies. Despite high quantitative agreement indicating that the students, parents, school governing bodies and village heads are aware of National Education Standards, school visions and education policies, qualitative data revealed that they could not explain the standards, visions and education policies.

The difference between quantitative and qualitative findings could be because quantitative data was collected using closed-ended questionnaires which had limited chances of quantifying and using explanations in relation to the data. The difference in quantitative and qualitative responses of the school governing bodies could also be due to individual failure to recall information about the national education policies or policies that they were trained in. It could also be due to English terminologies used for the NES and Policies which led to failure to relate aspects to their particular National Education Standards 17, 18 or 24. However, when interviewed, respondents could demonstrate that they engage in the

implementation of particular aspects of national education standards or education policies. This shows that despite really engaging in the implementation of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24, there is a theoretical information gap in their knowledge of what they are practicing regarding National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24.

### ***6.3.2 The Extent of Involvement of School Governing Bodies in the Implementation of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24***

The analysis of data on the above second objective of this study established that SGBs are extensively involved in the implementation of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24, despite some complaints about selective involvement. Quantitative data analysis found that most respondents agreed that SGBs are involved in decision-making in the schools, school improvement planning, budgeting and activities meant to give feedback to parents, award ceremonies for high-performing students and fundraising activities. Interviewees who provided qualitative data also mostly agreed to the involvement of SGBs in school undertakings but raised a complaint that they are not involved in all activities. Most student governors denied involvement in school budgets while Community governors also complained about intermittent involvement. The lack of involvement of students in school budgets could be due to the unwillingness of head teachers to involve students in financial matters of the school since they were not used to doing so for a long time. Whereas lack of involvement for community school stakeholders could be due to the fact that some school meetings to do with external visitors, are solely professional. The study also found that parent visits to schools to check on their wards' performance are allowed, but the parents do not regularly do so unless they are invited.

### ***6.3.3 How Decentralisation in the Secondary School Subsector is a Factor in the Implementation of Education Standards 17, 18 and 24***

Just like in the first two findings, the third key finding regarding objective number three of the study also drew mixed perceptions about the effect of decentralisation in the secondary education sector on the implementation of the National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24. Quantitative data from head teachers and SGBs revealed that with partial decentralisation, school stakeholders can make school-level decisions, give advice and ensure accountability and transparency without interference from higher political or educational authorities. However, qualitative data established that school governing bodies still do not have autonomy over important decision-making regarding the implementation of developmental projects. The difference between the respondents' quantitative and qualitative responses might be because the respondents were more truthful and assured of the attached confidentiality to the data provision in interviews than when using questionnaires. It could also be that the respondents had no chance to quantify the extent of autonomy that school governing bodies have in the closed-ended questionnaires that they used to provide data. As such, they found the opportunity to express themselves fully through interviews that were used to collect qualitative data. The difference could also be attributed to fear of further decentralisation which they thought would mean more responsibility to fund the schools. Other reasons for the difference could be a lack of full understanding of the items in the questionnaires, but they felt ashamed to ask for assistance at the time. All in all, the study found that the SGBs' lack of full autonomy over decision-making affects the implementation of various aspects of NES 17, 18 and 24, especially development projects. As such, decentralisation can be taken as a factor in the implementation of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24.

## 6.4 Conclusions

Considering the preceding research discussions and findings about the understanding of education standards by school governing bodies, this study on the *'Implementation of leadership standards in advancing school governance: A case of Selected ISEM Schools in Malawian Secondary Schools,'* has revealed that despite implementing some aspects of the education standards, school governing bodies do not fully understand national education standards. This conclusion is based on most school governing bodies' failure to explain national education standards, most education policies and school visions. In terms of the involvement of school governing bodies in the implementation of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24 in advancing school governance, this study has revealed that SGBs' in the sampled schools are highly involved since they participate in decision-making, school improvement planning, fundraising for their schools and organisation of school activities aimed at encouraging parents to take part in their children's education. This study has also established that school governing bodies are involved to a great extent in the implementation of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24. However, student stakeholders are not satisfactorily involved in school budgets.

Finally, the study found that school governing bodies have limited autonomy over some determinant decisions for the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24 in schools. They have to wait for a long time for the final say from authorities from the Education Division Offices or the Ministry of Education before implementing some aspects of National Education Standards 17, 18 and 24. As such, this study can confirm that decentralisation in the secondary education sector is affected by partial decentralisation in the

secondary school sub-sector. Decentralisation is therefore, a factor in the implementation of Leadership Standards 17, 18 and 24.

## **6.5 Research recommendations**

Considering the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for action by those that may be concerned, with the intent to improve school governance:

**Recommendation 1:** Apart from initial training, school governing bodies need ongoing training, especially on National Education Standards, education policies and school visions for maximum internalisation of content.

**Recommendation 2:** There is a need to enforce the inclusion of all stakeholders in school governance matters that concern them to enhance accountability, practice decentralised school governance and have inclusive contributions.

**Recommendation 3:** Higher offices need to further decentralise some decision-making powers to the secondary school level to enhance the timely implementation of matters concerning leadership standards 17, 18 and 24 by the local leadership.

## **6.6 Suggestions for further research**

The following suggestions for further research have been put forward for action by prospective researchers and concerned government authorities:

To achieve educational goals and objectives, this study will help encourage school leaders to understand and work to implement national education standards and policies.

For future researchers, another study can be conducted using different research techniques in other education divisions in Malawi for a better assessment of the implementation of national education standards.

Further research also needs to be done on what makes key school authorities not involve student stakeholders in school budgets.

There is a need for another study on strategies that can help to increase financial community initiative in schools instead of overdependence on government or donor funding.

## **6.7 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY TO THE MALAWIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The study has the following contributions to the Malawian Education system:

- i. It can help Policy makers at the Ministry of Education to know the state of matters pertaining to school leadership and act accordingly.
- ii. It can help the school communities to take their role in the education of their children seriously.
- iii. It can act as a research base for further studies.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to request your participation in this research which is voluntary and confidential.

The research I want to conduct forms part of a Master of Education in Education Leadership and Management. The study is entitled 'Implementation of leadership standards in advancing school governance in Malawi Secondary Schools: A Case of Selected Schools in Central West Education Division in Lilongwe'. It will require you to provide information/ fill out the questionnaire/ answer interview questions.

You will not be asked to reveal any information that will allow your identity to be established. If you are willing to participate in this study, please, sign this letter as a declaration of your consent. Under no circumstances will the identity of the participants be made known to others except me and my supervisor. The data that will be collected will be kept by only me throughout the process of collection till it is processed and handed over to my academic supervisor and institution. Dissemination of results will be restricted to academic and official use upon request.

My particulars, details of my supervisor and the institution I am studying at, have been included on this consent form for your verification of my identity and reporting in case the need may arise.

Your support rendered to me by participating in this important academic project will be greatly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,

Edna Alice Chirambo

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

Researcher's signature.....

Researcher's phone number.....

Supervisor.....

Institution.....

Date.....

**Appendix B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEAD TEACHERS, DEPUTY HEAD, HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS, PREFECTS AND BoGs ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADERSHIP STANDARDS IN ADVANCING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

POSITION OF PARTICIPANT IN THE SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear respondent,

My name is Edna Alice Chirambo, a student at Mzuzu University. I am researching the implementation of leadership standards in advancing school governance in Central West Education Division (CWED)". This research stands to be a must in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Masters of Education in Leadership and Management degree. I kindly request you to fill out this questionnaire. The information you provide will not be used against you and your school in any other way, so you are encouraged to fill it with honesty. The information will be treated as confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

General instructions

Do not write your name on this questionnaire

Kindly respond to all items

Section A: Background information

Instructions:

Please tick (✓) in the blank spaces provided to indicate your most appropriate opinion regarding a particular question or statement.

For how many years have you been holding your position at this school?

<1 year • 1-2 years • 3-4 years • 5-6 years • 6 + years •

Section B: How school governing bodies in CWED understand national education standards 17, 18 and 24 concerning school governance

For each statement or question in Table 1 below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by ticking in the appropriate spaces provided.

Key: SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = undecided; SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree

Table 1:

	Schools under the ISEM project are implementing educational standards 17,18 and 24 in the following various ways:	S	A	U	D	SD
1.	The school shares information about the school's vision and educational policies with:					
	i. Students					
	ii. Parents					
	iii. PTA/ Mother support group/Boys champion/BoG committee members					
	iv. Village heads					
2.	The school shares information about the Education					

	Standards 17, 18 and 24 with:					
	i. Students					
	iii. Parents					
	iv. PTA / Mother support group/Boys champion/BoG  committee members					
	v. Village heads					
3.	vi. The parents understand their roles and responsibilities in  improving the school					
4.	vii. The mother groups understand their roles and  responsibilities in improving the school					
5.	viii. The head teacher and senior staff prioritise student  education, safety and care					

Section C: Evaluating the extent to which school governing bodies in CWED are involved in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24

For each statement or question in Table 2 below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by ticking in the appropriate spaces provided.

Key: SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = undecided; SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree.

Table 2:

1.	School governing bodies (SMC/governing body/PTA and/or proprietor) in the school actively participate in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24 as seen in:	SA	A	U	D	SD
Education Standard 17: School Governance						
	i. High attendance at BoG meetings which are also regular, purposeful and well-documented.					
	ii. Training and members have a good understanding of their responsibilities.					
	iii. Encouragement of parents and the community to be involved in the school by organising activities and reporting on school events and achievements.					
	iv. Taking an active role in budgeting for all school funds and ensuring that all financial expenditure is properly accounted for and communicated to stakeholders.					
	v. Partnership between school leaders and the local community.					

	vi. Active involvement in raising funds for the school.					
	vii. Attendance of meetings and appropriate documentation of minutes for the meetings.					
	viii. Playing an active role in budgeting for all school funds.					
	ix. Ensuring that all financial expenditure is properly accounted for and communicated to stakeholders.					
	x. Playing an active role in school improvement planning.					
2.	School governing bodies (SMC/governing body/PTA and/or proprietor) in the school actively participate in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24 as seen in:					

Education Standard 18: School Leadership

The headteacher and senior staff demonstrate through their actions that they are accountable to the District/SMC/governing body, parents, community and students for the quality of education in the school:	SA	A	U	D	SD
i. The head teacher and senior staff work effectively with teachers and parents to improve the quality of the school.					
ii. The head teacher and senior staff prioritise student's education, safety and care and ensure that these are as good as possible.					
iii. The head teacher has good working relationships with teachers and other school bodies.					
iv. The head teacher meets, communicates and consults with staff regularly.					
v. The head teacher is on the school premises for most of the working week.					
vi. The head teacher and senior staff are respected					



	by students, teachers, parents and the community.					
	vii. Senior staff monitor teachers' attendance, punctuality and take action as necessary.					

3.	School governing bodies (SMC/governing body/ PTA and/or proprietor) in the school actively participate in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24  as seen in:	SA	A	U	D	SD
Education Standard 24: Management of Buildings and Facilities						
	i. The buildings and grounds are secure from intruders and are well cared for and maintained.					
	ii. All boarding hostels meet at least minimum requirements as set out in the legislation and regulations, including disability policies.					
	iii. Classrooms have sufficient benches and desks for					

	all students and a desk and chair for the teacher.					
	iv. Classrooms are of adequate size for the number of students, and are clean, safe, well-ventilated and well-lit.					
	v. Students and staff have access to an adequate and clean supply of water at all times.					
	vi. Latrines are sufficient in number, ensure privacy, are clean and hygienic and have hand washing facilities.					
	vii. Girls have access to a washroom.					

Section D: Assessing if decentralisation of the secondary education sector is a factor in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24.

For each statement or question below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by ticking in the appropriate spaces provided.

Key: SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = undecided; SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree.

Table 3:

1	School governing bodies (SMC/governing body/PTA	SA	A	U	D	SD
---	---	----	---	---	---	----

	and/or proprietor:					
	i. Can make decisions for the school without fear.					
	ii. Can make decisions for the school without consulting the district education office.					
	iii. Can discipline teachers.					
	iv. Can hire and fire support staff.					
	v. Can develop budgets for the school.					
	vi. Can decide how to spend resources.					
	vii. Can decide how to build or maintain school structures.					
	viii. Can advise the school head when they see challenges in the school.					
	ix. Can hold teachers accountable for poor performance in national examinations.					
	x. Can decide how to raise funds for the school.					
	xi. Can provide incentives for the teachers to work harder.					
	xii. Do not receive any interference from the local					

	politicians.					
	xiii. Do not receive interference from the district education office.					
	xiv. Do not receive any interference from the education division office.					

Thank you for your participation!

**Appendix C: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR BoGs REPRESENTATIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADERSHIP STANDARDS IN ADVANCING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

Dear respondent,

My name is Edna Alice Chirambo, a student at Mzuzu University. I am researching the “Implementation of Education Standards in Advancing School Governance in Central West Education Division (CWED)”. This research stands to be part of a requirement in partial fulfilment for Masters of Education in Leadership and Management degree. I kindly request you to answer the questions. The information you will provide will not be used against you or your school in any way, so you can respond honestly. The information provided will be treated as confidential and for academic purposes only.

General instructions

Do not give your name

Kindly respond to all items

Section A: Background Information

Gender:           • Male     • Female

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Instruction:

Answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge.

For how long have you been holding your position at this school?

1 year •      1-2 years •      3-4 years •      5-6 years •      6 + years •

Section B: Investigating how school governing bodies in CWED understand national education standards 17, 18 and 24; concerning school governance.

1. As a BoG/PTA member, can you say that your committee works together with the school and local community leaders at every stage of the implementation of the national education policies?

2. Can you explain to me some of the national educational policies that you know?

3. How many of these have you implemented in this school and how did your committee make sure that they are implemented?

4. Is there something that the school does to ensure that water is conserved and that its environment minimises runoff, wind erosion and deforestation, in line with national education policies?

5. Has the school's infrastructure (e.g. classrooms/hostels); been built according to requirements set out in the legislation and regulations, including those on disability?

Section C: To evaluate the extent to which School governing bodies are involved in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24, in CWED.

1. Do you think that the head teacher and staff work effectively with teachers and parents in improving the quality of education at this school?

2. What evidence is there that this school, does not hide anything from the SMC/governing body, parents, community and students on what they do about the quality of education?

3. Do parents and community members visit the school regularly and are they made welcome?
4. What events are organised by the SMC/governing body to encourage parents and community involvement in the school as well as to report on school events and achievements?
5. Does SMC/governing body members play a role in school improvement planning?
6. How many times does the SMC/governing body hold its meetings and how do you make sure that what you have discussed is not forgotten?

Section D: To assess if decentralisation of the secondary education sector is a factor in the implementation of education standards 17, 18 and 24.

1. How can you describe the SMC/governing body/ key school leaders' financial ability in implementing developmental projects?
2. What financial challenges have been faced by your committee?
3. Have there been times when decision-making from higher authorities (e.g. Division/ ministry); has delayed the implementation of something you were supposed to do as SMC/governing body, at this school?
4. How would you have liked things to be concerning the above question?

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix D: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM MZUZU UNIVERSITY



**MZUZU UNIVERSITY**

Department of Teaching, Learning and  
Curriculum Studies

Mzuzu University  
Private Bag 201  
Luwingu  
Mzuzu 2  
MALAWI

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

29<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: Ms EDNA CHIRAMBO**

Ms Edna Chirambo is a registered Master of Education (Leadership and Management) Program student at Mzuzu University. She has been cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the research study she is conducting as a requirement for the program.

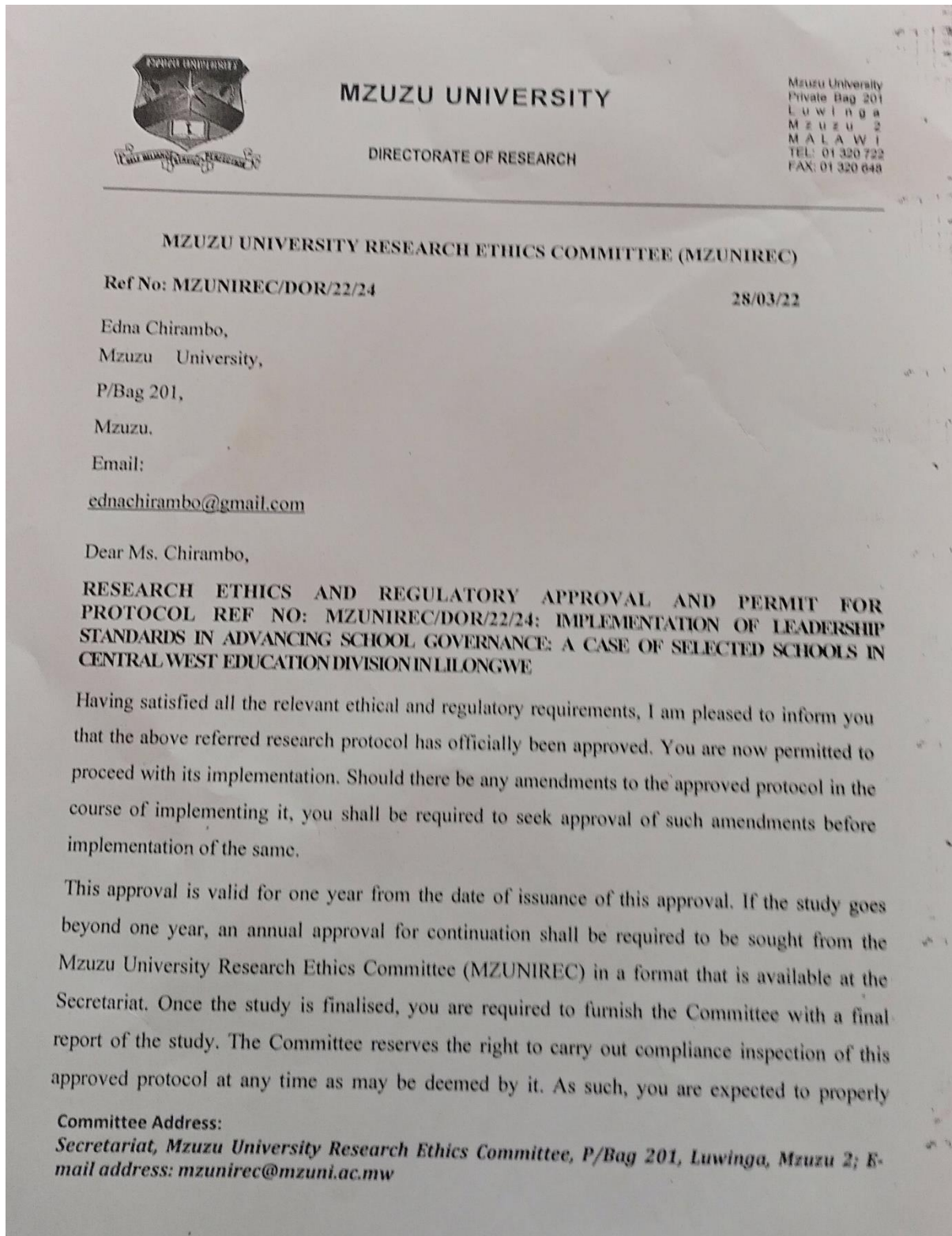
Kindly assist her accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr Margaret M. Mdolo**  
**Program Coordinator**



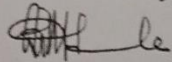
**Appendix E: RESEARCH CLEARANCE FROM MZUNIREC**



maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



**Gift Mbwele**

**MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR**

**For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC**

**Appendix F: PERMISSION LETTER TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN  
CENTRAL WEST EDUCATION DIVISION**

REF. NO CWED.ACADRESEARCH/03/2022 Date: 18 JULY 2022

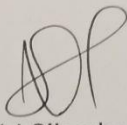
FROM: THE EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER, CENTRAL WEST  
EDUCATION DIVISION, P.O. BOX 98, LILONGWE

TO : THE HEADTEACHER

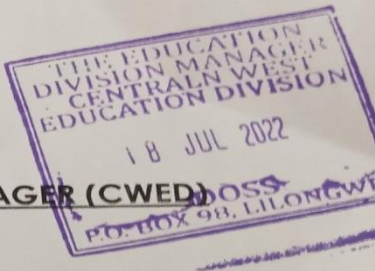
**RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN  
CWED SECONDARY SCHOOL.**

I write to advise that EDNA ALICE CHIRAMBO..... has  
been granted permission to conduct an academic research to  
collect data for his/her..... MASTERS IN EDUCATION..... dissertation  
in your school. His/her area of study is  
IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADERSHIP STANDARDS IN  
ADVANCING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN MALAWIAN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE OF SELECTED SCHOOLS IN C

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 assistance  
required.

  
V. Sibale

**For: EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER (CWED)**



**Appendix G: REQUEST TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS**

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Luwinga, Mzuzu 2.

Tel. 0997197314

The head teacher,

\_\_\_\_\_ Secondary School.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

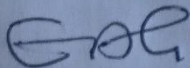
**REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL.**

I write to request for permission to carry out a research study in your school.

My name is Edna Alice Chirambo, a post-graduate student at Mzuzu University. I am carrying out a research study on 'Implementation of Leadership Standards in advancing school governance in Malawian Secondary Schools: A case of selected schools in central education division'. This is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of education in leadership and management which I am pursuing.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University and the Education Division Manager for CWED.

Yours Faithfully,



Edna Alice Chirambo