

**EFFECTIVENESS OF PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS/ SCHOOL
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT: THE CASE
OF EIGHT SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MCHINJI AND LILONGWE
DISTRICTS**

M.Ed. (POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP) THESIS

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**UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
CHANCELLOR COLLEGE**

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By

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(Policy, Planning and Leadership)

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MAY, 2017

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes.

MAGRET MILAZI ALFAZEMA

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Clemence and my children: Zema, Tayamika, Samuel and Daniel.

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ABSTRACT

Despite government's effort in coming up with policies and guidelines that encourage SMCs and PTAs in management and governance of secondary schools, schools still experience challenges that render them inefficient and ineffective. The purpose of this study therefore was to explore the effectiveness of PTAs / SMCs in secondary school management. The study used both qualitative and quantitative (though descriptively) research methods for generating data. To generate data the study used different types of instruments namely; questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. The study was carried out in eight secondary schools which were purposively selected from Mchinji and Lilongwe districts. Participants to the study included head teachers, teachers, school prefects, and SMC and PTA members. The findings of the study revealed that most members have not received a formal training on their roles and responsibilities. There is lack of uniformity among school committee members on how issues of quality of learning are addressed. Most secondary schools have no School Improvement Plans. Schools that have School Action Plans do not involve SMC/PTAs in preparation of this document as evidenced by interviews with PTA/SMC members. The study concludes that with high levels of inefficiencies in public secondary schools, PTAs/SMCs are well positioned to keep administrations in check within the context of decentralisation in Malawi. The untrained PTAs/SMCs offer very little to advance this cause as their participation is very limited. The implication is that there is need for PTAs/SMCs trainings which should be facilitated by Educational Planners and Secondary School Inspectors to ensure that the committees are empowered to hold management accountable.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
CWED	Central West Education Division
DEM	District Education Manager
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
GPF	General Purpose Fund
IPC	Internal Procurement Committee
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NES	National Education Standards
NSCPPS	National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary Schools
ORT	Other Recurrent Transaction
PIF	Policy Investment Framework
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SDF	School Development Fund
SEMA	Senior Education Methods Advisor
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SSPS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TRF	Text book Revolving Fund

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the background of the study about the effectiveness of Parent Teacher Associations/School Management Committee in school management in Mchinji and Lilongwe districts in Malawi. The statement of the problem that has motivated this study as well as the purpose of the study are also highlighted. The chapter further outlines research questions and the significance of the study in the field of education as a whole.

1.1 Background to the study

Malawi has experienced some major changes in education since the dawn of multiparty politics in the 1990s. Notable amongst these changes was the introduction of Free Primary Education which resulted in the dramatic increase of primary school enrolments from 1.9 million in 1993-94 academic year to 2.9 million in 1994-95 (MacJessie-Mbewe, 2002). This in turn had put pressure on the secondary sub-sector, which also experienced some rapid expansion. Though this was followed by an increase in funding levels of both subsectors from both government and the development partners, the demand for education was simply too high and it left serious funding gaps. Such gaps would compromise on the quality and access to education. In view of these challenges, Ministry of Education, Science and

Technology (MoEST) proposed key policy directions for both primary and secondary education sectors. Among the policy directions proposed for secondary subsector, was that selection to day secondary schools should be based on the principle of local catchment area.

The conversion of Distance Education Centres (DEC) to Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) through the secondary school unification policy in 1999 has meant that secondary education is offered through four different kinds of secondary schools; three of which are owned by government. The three kinds of government schools are grant-aided, conventional and community day secondary schools. While grant-aided schools are co-owned with churches and often have more resources for teaching and learning, conventional secondary schools are wholly owned by government and could be categorized as having moderate resources for teaching and learning. Community day secondary schools (CDSSs) are, on the other hand, co-owned with the communities which they serve. These schools have very limited resources for teaching and learning including laboratories and chemicals for science teaching. An equity issue concerning the three kinds of government schools is that they tend to unintentionally create social stratification in the society (NHDR, 2015).

The transformation of the CDSSs assumed that the system of local recruitment would reduce the need for boarding facilities, however, where boarding was deemed necessary; parents would bear the full costs. These changes would bring more autonomy to the schools and make communities around these schools and parents participate more in the activities of the schools.

1.1.1 Education Decentralisation in Malawi

The proposed changes were in tune with the 1998 National Decentralization policy whose objective was to create a democratic environment and institutions in Malawi for governance and development at the local level which facilitate the participation of the grassroots in decision making (MoEST, 2008,). The changes were even more stressed in primary schools that were turned into “full community primary schools through increasing the autonomy of school management committees (SMC)” and that while government continues to be the main provider of education, “parents and communities shall be involved in the management of schools” (MoEST,2000, p.3). These policy directions are in line with the argument by Hanushek and Woessman (2007) that increasing autonomy to SMCs has an impact on the students’ performance and that students tend to perform better in schools that have autonomy in personnel and day- to- day decisions in particular when there is accountability.

According to MoEST (2013), secondary school devolution has focused on making secondary schools more autonomous by the creation of cost centres. This has been planned to proceed in phases due to the fact that these institutions were in different phases of readiness. In order to empower the institutions under decentralisation, the institutions are also authorized to retain and use some of these fees. A structure to manage the fees retained has been put in place. Among the structures is the School Committee or Board of Governors whose roles are; monitoring maintenance and provision of school infrastructure, furniture and equipment, monitoring reports that *relate* to collection and use of revenue, advising the Ministry as to whether the conduct of the school is generally in accordance with the schools’ approved budget, hire and fire part-time and parallel instructors and additional support staff with

support from the Human Resource Management of the ministry, participate in review of fees collected and utilised by the institution.

1.1.2 School management committees

MoEST (2002 b) defines a School Management Committee (SMC) as a group of people appointed to assist the Ministry of Education in the smooth running of the school. These SMCs are composed of members of the community served by the school. They comprise nine members: The District Education Manager (DEM) or his/her representative; the member nominated by the proprietor of the school; a member appointed by the local education authority (LEA); four elected members who are parents of children who attend the school; and two members from the community who have an interest in education are co-opted by the parents (MoEST, 2004).

MoEST (2004) came up with National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management (NSCPPSM) which served as a guiding document in community participation. According to this guide, the functions of the SMCs are: Monitoring attendance and punctuality of both teachers and pupils; advising the proprietor (government or faith organization) of the appointment and dismissal of non-teaching staff; assisting in the enrolment of pupils; encouraging pupil's attendance; ensuring recommendations made by the Ministry of Education are implemented; advising the proprietor whether the conduct of the school is in accordance with the wishes of the local community; checking, inspecting and maintaining school buildings and equipment; initiating development projects at the school with the help of other community members and monitoring the quality of learning at the school.

The handbook on the New Education Act (2013, p5) summarises the role of the SMCs as “observing the attendance and punctuality of teachers and students; advising on appointment; resignation and dismissal of teachers and non-teaching staff; and checking instruction and inspection”. SMCs play these roles through overseeing the development and implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). A SIP is a school-community plan for implementing specific activities designed to improve the quality of the school. According to the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management (2004), “the ultimate objective of the school improvement plan is to improve student achievement levels”.

In Malawi, SMCs are a legal requirement for all schools as stipulated in the Education Act of 2013. The amended 2013 Education Act section (21) sub section (1) puts more emphasis on the importance of SMC in respect to primary schools unlike in secondary schools. MoEST further recommends that every school should have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) made up of parents, teachers and community leaders (MoEST, 2004). PTAs are not a legal requirement, but they are central to on-going community participation in primary school management (MoEST, 2011)

Unlike in primary schools where the school has both the PTA and SMC, inspection reports indicate that most secondary schools in Central West Education Division have PTAs only, with exception of some Community Day Secondary Schools. Chepuka (2009) who also conducted studies in South West and South East Education divisions shares the observation that PTAs are the most common feature in secondary subsector. In his study both SMCs and PTAs existed in six out of the ten CDSSs however in CDSSs where both committees existed one was generally more active

than the other. Chepuka further noted that PTAs were available at each of the ten CDSSs. This being the case, where there are no SMCs, PTAs are required to function the way SMCs function. Therefore in this study both PTAs and SMCs will be treated as carrying the same functions in the secondary schools and will be treated as one.

1.1.3 Parent Teacher Association

The PTA is an association in which teachers and parents are united to promote the education of the children in a particular school. The PTA is a group of people who share a common interest in education and come together to discuss the needs of their school. MoEST (2004) prescribes the structure of a PTA as follows: The executive must have 10 members: the Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, vice-chair, vice-secretary and 5 Committee Members. The head teacher assumes the role of secretary to the PTA. The PTA chairperson must be a different person to the chair of the SMC and 30% of office holders should be women. According to MoEST (2004), the functions of PTA are; Electing the School Management Committee; Mobilising the community around issues identified in the School Action Plan; Making the SMC aware of issues of concern in the community regarding the primary school; Holding the SMC to account through the holding of regular meetings to which they must report on their actions. The Ministry goes further to prescribe functions that PTAs do to include those affecting the SMCs. Obviously functions of a PTA in the developing world will vary from those in the developed world due to the different educational contexts hence the difference in the stresses of the committees.

Traditionally, parent involvement in education has included home-based activities such as helping with homework, encouraging children to read, and promoting school

attendance. The new roles would therefore ensure that parents participate more in the management of schools. Government policy of moving the responsibility of decision making to local schools implies redistributing power from central bureaucrats to principals and teachers. However, for these school authorities to function effectively and make good use of the available resources, parents, who presumably have a greater stake in the content and quality of their children's education, have the duty to ensure accountability from these local authorities.

MoEST (2002a) therefore has emphasised that the existence of active and effective SMCs and PTAs assist to cement good relationship between the school and the community. As Rose (2003) argues, community participation in education is seen as a way to increase resources, improve accountability of schools to the community they serve, ensure a more cost-effective use of resources and, importantly, be responsive to local needs. Therefore this study will focus on the effectiveness of PTAs or SMCs in secondary school management.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Prior to the development of Policy Investment Framework (PIF) 2000-2012, the education sector experienced the following challenges: Inefficient use of existing resources such as infrastructure, time and staff; low funding to secondary subsector especially in CDSSs that receive less resources than other government and grant aided secondary schools; partial implementation of the curriculum which in turn affects negatively public examination and results; poor learning achievement with only around 50% of students passing end of cycle examination (MoEST 2000). The development of PIF, therefore, brought a solution to end these problems by

encouraging relevant stakeholders such as parents, communities, students and others to be involved in the management of all secondary schools in order to make secondary schools accountable to the communities they serve (MoEST, 2000).

Despite the government's efforts in coming up with policies and guidelines that encourage community participation through SMCs and PTAs in management and governance of secondary schools, the schools still experience challenges that render them ineffective. These challenges include: indiscipline cases for both teachers and students, mismanagement of resources in schools, inadequate teaching resources, schools not administering end of term examinations, teachers not marking examination and dropout of girls due to pregnancy, poor maintenance of the infrastructure, and some CDSS still operating from primary school premises despite the policy that required these schools to have own premises within three years from the day of commencement, (CWED audit reports, 2012 ; and Discipline report CWED, 2012). Scholarly as well as policy recommendations that favour the use of PTAs to solve these problems are therefore being challenged by the continued worsening of management of these schools. These challenges motivated the researcher to further explore whether PTAs /SMCs in CWED (with a special focus on Mchinji and Lilongwe districts secondary schools) actually function as recommended in the policy documents.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore how effective secondary school PTAs/SMCs are in local governance and management of secondary schools.

1.4 Research questions

In order to explore the effectiveness of PTAs/SMCs in secondary school management, the study answered the following questions;

1.4.1 Key research question:

How effective are secondary school PTAs/SMCs in Local governance and management of schools?

1.4.2 Sub research questions

- How are secondary school PTAs/SMCs involved in management of school revenue?
- What role do secondary schools PTAs/SMCs play in infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation of the school?
- How do secondary school PTAs/SMCs monitor the quality of learning in schools?
- How are secondary school PTAs/SMCs involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the school improvement plans?

1.5 Significance of the study

1.5.1 Contribution to knowledge

The study would contribute to the available literature on the effectiveness of school management committees.

1.5.2 Contribution to policy

Through the exploration of the flaws in the system and proposing the solutions to the flaws, it is the belief of the author that the study would contribute to ensuring that more resources are put to better use and more children acquire better education.

1.5.3 Contribution to practice

The findings of this study may help educational authorities to know how to empower PTA/SMCs available in these schools for better learning outcomes. Malawi public service is undergoing reforms and one of the areas of focus is decentralisation. The education sector is one of the areas that have been targeted and as PTAs/SMCs represent the demand side of the decentralisation concept, findings of the study would put to light areas that need improvement for parents and communities to demand for better educational services from their school authorities.

1.6 Definitions of operational terms

There are a number of terms that need to be defined in order to make a clear understanding of their usage in the study these terms are defined below

School Management Committee (SMC): These are defined as a group of people appointed to assist the Ministry of Education in the smooth running of the school.

The Parent Teacher Association: Is an association in which teachers and parents are united to promote the education of the children in a particular school.

Decentralisation: Is generally described as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organisations or the private sector

Participation: Is any kind of contribution, input and sharing in management and development processes of the school.

An IPC: Is the body responsible for controlling and approving procurement activities within the procurement entity.

1.7 Chapter summary

Various issues relating to School Management Committees Parent Teacher Associations and education decentralisation has been discussed in the chapter. It has been noted in the chapter that SMC/PTAs are expected to carry out a number of functions for smooth running of the school. Effective SMCs and PTAs assist to cement the relationship between the school and community. It has also been shown that the education sector is facing a number of challenges in terms of infrastructure, low funding especially in CDSS, inadequate teaching staff, poor learning achievement and many more. The next chapter discusses literature review.

1.8 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis has been organised into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction of the study which comprises: background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study and its research questions and significance of the study. The second chapter is the literature review section and it comprises of the review of related literature on concept of participation in education, decentralization, School Management committees and challenges in educational decentralisation. The third chapter is the research methods and design. The chapter focuses on the design of the study, the sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study ethical consideration and limitations of the study. The fourth chapter will consists of an analysis and discussion of results. Chapter five, the last chapter will offer the conclusions and implications.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter overview

This study examines the effectiveness of PTAs/SMCs in school management. This is within the context of educational decentralisation in Malawi, that seeks to bring more autonomy to the schools and make communities around these schools and parents participate more in the activities of the schools. To guide the understanding of the topic under study, this chapter seeks to unveil concepts of participation, decentralisation as well as school management committees as understood within the education sector. Practices around the world as revealed through studies by different practitioners will also form part of this literature review.

2.1 Concept of Participation

The concept of participation in education has been described by Obondo, Mapfumo and Makoni (2005) as implying any kind of contribution, input and sharing in management and development processes of the school. It also connotes involvement, engagement and or membership of policy and decision making organs within the school. Participation by parents, teachers, community members and pupils is therefore a key cornerstone of good school governance. Aref (2010) recognises six types of community participation which are: *empowerment*-where local people have control over the development without any influence; *partnership*- people have some degree of

influence; *consultation*- people are consulted in several ways and some of their contributions may be accepted; *informing*- people are told about development programs but their contribution is not taken on board and *manipulative* where issues come from powerful individuals or the government. Similarly, Shaeffer (1994) as cited in Aref (2010), outline seven levels of community participation and these are: involvement through the contribution of money, materials, and labour; involvement through ‘attendance’ (e.g. at parents’ meetings at school), implying passive acceptance of decisions made by others; involvement through consultation on a particular issue; participation in the delivery of a service, often as a partner with other actors; participation as implementers of delegated powers; and participation “in real decision making at every stage,” including identification of problems, at planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. Both of these cases reveal high and lower levels of participation with higher levels involving empowerment of communities to take ownership. This study explored the effectiveness of SMC/PTAs through assessing their levels of participation in secondary school management. Do they have the capacity to make decisions on their own? Are they consulted when issues arise in schools or are they told what to do by the school management team?

Heneveld and Craig (1996) recognise parent and community support as one of the key factors to determine school effectiveness in Sub-Saharan Africa. They identify five categories of parent and community support that are relevant to the region: (1) children come to school prepared to learn; (2) the community provides financial and material support to the school; (3) communication between the school, parents, and community is frequent; (4) the community has a meaningful role in school governance; and (5) community members and parents assist with instruction. Again

this is an example of different levels of participation of communities and parents in children's education where some will only assist them at the house hold level and others go a step further to take charge of events right at the children's schools.

Uemura (1999) argues that community participation can assist in; maximizing the use of limited resource, identifying and addressing problems in schools, promoting girls education, realizing democracy, increasing accountability and ensuring sustainability. Rose (2003) also regards community participation in education as a way to: increase resources, improve accountability of schools to the community they serve, ensure a more cost-effective use of resources and, importantly, be responsive to local needs and as a result, it intends to improve equitable access, retention, quality and performance of schooling.

While schools may officially have formal structures designed to facilitate community and parental involvement, there is often a large gap between intent and outcome. According to Chimombo and Kadzamira (2001), studies on community participation which were conducted at primary school level revealed that parents in Malawi are generally not involved in classroom teaching, let alone monitoring of teacher performance and other critical issues. Even when parents nominally participate in school management, they may have a limited say. In some contexts 'participation' is confined to raising money, with limited influence over how it is used. This situation however happens due to different constraints within the systems.

Participation is viewed by many as a goal in its own right, but for most parents the ultimate aim of any involvement in school management is to improve children's

education (EFA, 2008). Community participation is therefore one of the mechanisms to empower people to take part in educational development. Without community participation, there is obviously no partnership, no development and no program. Hence lack of community participation in decision making to implement educational development can lead to failure in the community development (Aref, 2010). Participation will, however be a farfetched concept if the centre has firm control of every aspect of education. Decentralisation of education systems and structures therefore holds the key if communities are to participate in children's education within their localities. The next topic therefore examines how important decentralisation is for better community participation.

2.2 Decentralisation

The term "decentralisation" embraces a variety of concepts which must be carefully analysed in any particular country before determining if projects or programs should support reorganisation of financial, administrative, or service delivery systems. Decentralisation is generally described as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organisations or the private sector. Different types of decentralisation should be distinguished because they have different characteristics, policy implications, and conditions for success. There are four commonly cited forms of decentralisation and these are devolution, de-concentration, delegation and privatisation (Rondinelli et al., 1984 as cited in McGinnand Welsh 1999).

Hanson (1997) defines *de-concentration* as the transfer of tasks and work, but not authority, to other units within an organization. He defines *delegation* as the transfers

of decision-making authority from higher to lower hierarchical units. However, this authority can be withdrawn at the discretion of the delegating unit. On the other hand *devolution* is defined as transfer of authority to a unit that can act independently, or a unit that can act without first asking permission. And lastly, *privatisation* is a form of devolution in which responsibility and resources are transferred from public sector institutions to private sector ones.

Malawi has taken the form of devolution of administrative authority and political authority to the districts (Chiweza, 2010). Between 1964 and 1994 Malawi was subject to the autocratic rule of President Hastings Banda, but the arrival of democratic elections in 1994 signalled the start of a fundamental review of governance in Malawi. In November 1993, the government of Malawi began a process of discussion of governmental decentralisation to local Districts. This became cabinet policy in January 1996. The bill on decentralisation was enacted in 1998.

McGinn and Welsh (1999) argue that decentralisation increases efficiency in management and governance, allows faster identification of problems and search for more appropriate responses. They further states that it is a result of political democratization as people want to be consulted and involved in decision-making that concern them directly. It also helps in clarifying lines of accountability and allows for mobilisation of resources through community participation that could not be available otherwise.

According to GoM (2002, p.52), “Decentralisation will be the major driving force in strengthening efficiency and accountability of resources and results.” According to

section 2 of the decentralisation policy, decentralisation in Malawi diverts the centre of implementation responsibilities and transfers these to the districts. The essence is to “have governmental agencies at the district and local levels integrated into one administrative unit, through the process of institutional integration, manpower absorption, composite budgeting and provision of funds for the decentralised services”(National Education policy, 1998). One of the government agencies affected by this transfer of responsibilities is the Ministry of Education through what is known as educational decentralisation.

2.2.1 Education decentralisation

According to Gershberg and Winkler (2003), the rationale for education decentralization is to improve efficiency, effectiveness and democracy. He also argues that decentralisation improves equity although it is also acknowledged that because decentralisation makes localities more reliant upon their economic and social endowments, some aspects of equity suffer in the absence of compensatory mechanisms. Education decentralisation has many facets because it deals with changes in the way school systems go about making policies, generating revenue, spending funds, training teachers, designing curricula and managing local schools (Dyer & Rose, 2005).

Transparency in the local management of resources is probably one of the main challenges to its success. Ensuring that rules and regulations are known to all and that parents who contribute to school financing have an explicit right to know how these funds are spent is indispensable. Training and setting up financial control structures are equally important.

Decentralisation in most developing countries is interpreted in three complementary ways and these are; asking elected local authorities to take charge of education in their area, strengthening the role of regional and district education offices and increasing school autonomy in resource management. In Malawi, the role of district offices have been strengthened in such a way that all district offices are cost centres and are responsible for all basic education activities in the district. In addition, regional offices are responsible for all secondary education in all the districts in the region. However, according to MoEST (2014), district councils will also be responsible for management of secondary Education.

2.2.2 Goals of education decentralisation

There are a number of reasons, according to Hanson (1997), why education should be decentralised. These include: Accelerated economic development, increased management efficiency, redistribution of financial responsibility, increased democratization through the distribution of power, Greater local control through deregulation, market-based education, neutralizing competing centres of power, improving the quality of education. Gershberg and Winkler (2003) simplify the rationale behind education decentralisation as improving efficiency.

2.3 School Management committees

Devolution does not end at the district council level. The devolved functions and responsibilities assigned to the District Councils should lead ultimately to devolution of both staff and budgets at the individual schools. Driving this goal is the notion that increased flexibility at the school level will permit decision making to be faster, more informed, more flexible, and more responsive to local needs than decisions made in

the capital city. Moreover, the effectiveness of the school system relies on three assumptions; that parents and communities effectively participate, that they have the capacity to improve the schools and that the school – district interactions supports the efficiency and accountability of all actors.

In Spain and Nicaragua, and in many educational districts in the United States, school-based management has become a cornerstone of decentralization movements. Local school councils made up of elected parents, teachers, staff members, and sometimes students have been granted the authority to hire and fire the school director, approve school expenditures, manage the discipline program, and evaluate the progress of the school's academic program. According to Beck and Murphy (1995) as cited in Nyandoro, Mapfumo and Makoni (2013, p258), decentralisation of education to schools has been called different names in different countries. In some countries, it is called School Based Management. According to Caldwell (2005), as cited in Bogaert, Goutall, Saraf and White (2012), "School Based Management is the systematic decentralisation of authority and responsibility to the school level to make decisions on significant matters related to the school operations within a centrally determined framework of goals policies curriculum standards and accountability". In a school based management, projects work through school committees. Osei-Owusu and kwame (2012) adds that school management committee is the first step towards improving schools.

According to Govinda and Bondyapadhyay (2010), as cited in Bandyopadhyay and Dey (2011), community based organisations such as school management committees have a significant role to play in the local governance and functioning of schools.

They argue that combating educational exclusion is closely associated with an increase in awareness among local education governing agencies about local education problems and their effective participation in day to day functioning of schools as well as decision making process. Onderi and Makori (2010) contend that in both developing and developed countries there have been a growing move through legislation on successive legislative changes to involve parents in the education of their children. These resulted in the transfer of power from local authorities to schools governing bodies.

However according to Shatkin and Gershberg (2007) as cited in Boot (2011, p10), there are three factors which shape the extent of parent and community influence and these are; the degree of authority decentralised to school level that is to say whether school committees are authorised to make important decisions such as making budgets and how they use school buildings and influence in the teachers' salaries. The second factor is the degree of authority of SMCs relative to the Principals, that is, whether they are allowed by the Principal to make policies. The third one is the representation of parents or community members to other groups in decision-making for example whether they are well represented in the discipline committees or not. The more parents or other community members are in a committee relative to other groups like teachers the more likely they are to have influence. Osei-Owusu (2012) further cites an example of Ghana where great variations exist among schools in terms of participation of parents and communities such that there is no systematic mechanism to initiate school committees and too many remain dormant and unable to mobilize resources. This study therefore will investigate on how much authority SMC/PTAs have on decision-making in schools and what influence they have on the

community and also the disparities that do exist between SMC/PTA of different institutions.

2.3.1 Roles of school committees

The school committees vary in their mandate as they may (1) monitor the school's performance, for example, in test scores or teacher and student attendance; (2) raise funds and create endowments for the school; (3) appoint, suspend, dismiss, and remove teachers, and ensure that teachers' salaries are paid regularly; and (4) approve annual budgets, including the development budget, and examine monthly financial statements" (World Bank, 1997).

In Malawi, school management committees are a legal requirement as stipulated in the Education Act of 2013. While Malawian school committees are mandated to monitor the performance of the school in test scores, teacher and students attendance, raise funds for the school, in other countries they go a step further to be able to appoint, suspend, dismiss and remove teachers, approve or develop annual budgets and examine monthly financial transaction. In Malawi, teachers are not employed by the SCMs/PTAs, hence they cannot suspend or dismiss teachers, however, they can recommend disciplinary actions if the committees are functional. This study will therefore find out if the committees monitor the performance of students, monitor both teachers and students performance, are able to raise funds for the school and monitor the school infrastructure.

Some scholars have stressed particular roles that SMCs play among which are school governance, financial management and accountability and infrastructure management. The following section highlights these particular roles.

2.3.1.1 School management committees and governance

The existence of local level organizations (for example, PTAs, school management committees) that allow parents to participate in school level governance are especially important. They allow parents to hold schools accountable. However, the parents ability to hold schools accountable depend on [a] their knowledge of their school's performance and the norms and standards of service delivery that apply to their school; [b] the existence of incentives for the school to respond to parental concerns and interests; and [c] the capacity of school teachers and headmasters to make resource allocation decisions, (Crouch and Winkler, 2008)

Focusing on parental involvement, Jimenez and Vicente(1996) find that local financial contributions increased the productivity of public schools in the Philippines relative to central financing. Jimenez and Sawada (2001) as cited in Hanushek and Woessmann (2007) show that enhanced community and local involvement improved student learning in El Salvador.

2.3.1.2 School management committees and Financial Management

Fullan (1991) as cited in Nyandoro et al. (2013, p259), commended that financial delegation to local level School Boards is a step forward in involving parents in school issues. A study he conducted in Zimbabwe revealed that lack of knowledge of the roles as outlined in the statutory guideline, was affecting school development

committees in their effectiveness in financial management. He further cites Coleman's studies (2003), carried out in England, Wales, and Canada that revealed that there were strong links between financial delegation, more purposeful management and school development planning. With SMCs, school could more easily direct its funds to meet its perceived needs and could make quick responses where necessary.

One sees the link between SMCs and financial management when s/he considers the situation of Secondary education in Malawi. Policy stipulates that fees that is retained at school is supposed to be managed by the school and school management committees are expected to be involved in the management of these school funds. Fees collected are for tuition, textbook revolving fund (TRF), General Purpose Fund (GPF); and development fee which vary from one school to another depending on the type of developments being carried out. All these fees are collected and retained at school with the exception of tuition fee which is deposited in the government account number one. Good and efficient SMCs can ensure the utilisation of these funds to make the schools better. Therefore the study will look at how the SMC/PTAs are involved in the management of finances.

2.3.1.3 SMCs and Accountability

Parental involvement in education, particularly in school governance, is seen as a means of making schools more accountable to the society which funds them. This has been witnessed in some places such as England and Wales, Canada and the United States. The notion of parental involvement for accountability derives from a more market-oriented concept in which school-family partnerships are viewed rather like business partnership, through which the two parties receive mutual and

complementary benefits which enable them to operate more effectively (OECD, 1997). The extensive examination of six case studies on the Philippines, Kenya, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Colombia and Bolivia led Rugh and Bossert (1998) to the conclusion that teachers and other school staff feel they should be accountable to community clients only when the community holds some power over them.

According to Thapa, (2012), parental involvement can be of three types that is parent as educators, parents as partners and parents as decision makers. In India, it is encouraged that parents get involved as decision makers with the objective to make teachers and principals more accountable for the education delivery which in turn would lead towards the better learning outcomes. He further argues that when parents become active as decision makers in school, then they would also be encouraged getting involved as educators.

2.3.1.4 School management committee and infrastructure management

According to a research conducted by Mupindu (2012), school development committees in Zimbabwe have assisted in construction of infrastructure and procurement of instructional materials and this has allowed parental involvement in the education system there by promoting participation and collaboration. It is argued by researchers that provision of classrooms and teachers houses enhances the quality of education. The study also revealed that the school development committees worked with the principals to improve the discipline of learners. On financial management, it was observed that the School Development committee had a great limitation in control of finances as the finances raised were managed by the school principal and

not the school autonomy to the schools and make communities around these schools and parents participate more in the activities of the schools.

2.4 Challenges in Educational Decentralisation

Onderi and Makori (2012), bring to light the view of some educational professionals who oppose the idea of parental involvement in governing bodies such as Parent Teachers Association and school management committees. Shearn, Broadbent and Laughlin (1995) add to the argument stating that such governing bodies are non-professional and lay and that they lack relevant skills, time, understanding and knowledge about education in general and therefore ill equipped for certain roles. Gaynor (1998) analyses the complex relationship between teachers and parents in her study on teacher management with a focus on the decentralisation of education. She argues that many parents in many countries would like to be more involved in selecting and monitoring teachers. However, analysing impacts of the El Salvador's EDUCO project in which parents are responsible for school management and monitor teachers, Gaynor (1998) stressed that the teachers feel threatened by parental involvement, believing that it will diminish public regard for their professional status. In the studies conducted in Malawi, according to Chimombo and Kadzamira (2001), it was found out that most school committees did not monitor teacher performance because members felt inferior to teachers due to their education qualifications. Those who support parental involvement, however, argue that active support from key stakeholders is critical to sustainable educational quality.

The study by Hanushek and Woessman (2007) outlines evidence from within a few developing countries that supports positive effects of decentralisation, school

autonomy and community involvement. Jimenez and Sawada (2001) as cited in Hanushek and Woessman (2007) show that enhanced community and local involvement improved student learning in El Salvador. According to Galiani and Schargrodsky (2002) as cited in Hanushek and Woessman (2007, p71) show that decentralisation in the Argentine secondary school system improved educational test performance. Álvarez, Moreno, and Patrinos (2006) as cited in Hanushek and Woessman (2007) find that decentralisation of decision-making to the local level in Mexico positively affects student outcomes, and they also find that accountability to be very important in enhancing local decision making. Skoufias and Shapiro (2006) suggest for Mexico that the combination of increased school resources and local school management can produce small but statistically significant improvements in learning.

Despite the emphasis on decentralization, the challenge lies on whether parents and local community members support decentralisation enough to commit the extra time, energy, and resources required to make it work. Compounding the problem is that the local citizenry often knows little of what is expected of them, or the benefits that are supposed to result. This lack of local awareness is quite common in nations with long histories of centralized government. These countries are accustomed to sending out directives and do not understand (or feel) the need to "market" reform at the local level by informing members of the public or communicating or exchanging ideas with them.

In Malawi, however, the study conducted by Ng'ambi (2010) noted that the line agencies have not been fully integrated into one administrative unit with composite

budgeting due to the incomplete nature of the sector devolution process. For example, in key sectors such as agriculture, health, and education it is only the ORT budget that has been devolved to the districts and funds for this flow directly to the districts. Even within the ORT itself, there are also some variations. For example, in the education sector, procurement of teaching and learning materials is done by the Ministry of Education. Even though the schools themselves have some budget for local smaller purchases, much of the procurement on teaching and learning is still being done centrally.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

According to Kader (1999), as cited in Bray (2001, p5), a functioning school 'is a true community in its own right, and an indispensable centre for the wider community's social and cultural needs and interests'. Bray (2001) further argues that schools in all societies may be focal points for community activity and development and school committees are important instruments for achieving these goals, especially when they include not only parents but also representatives of religious organisations, commercial bodies, NGOs, and other groups. According to MoEST (2004), SMCs should manage resources at school including teachers and pupils studying at that particular school and on the other hand Parents Teacher Associations have the responsibility to mobilise the communities and hold the SMC accountable. In order to achieve school objectives, SMC/PTAs should effectively participate in day to day functioning of schools as well as on decision making process. Participation is therefore the central theme when one considers the existence of SMCs/PTAs. But effectiveness of these structures will vary from one community to another due to levels of participation within these structures as well as their effectiveness in

mobilising communities to participate in the schools' developments. As this study assessed the effectiveness of these SMC/PTAs in local governance and management of secondary schools, the Shaeffer ladder for analysis of participation will guide the study as its theoretical framework. This model was developed in 1994. It is a modification of the ladder of participation developed by Arnstein (1976). According to Bray (2001) Shaeffer's Ladder of participation aimed at analysing participation other than partnership. Reimer (1997) as cited in Bray (2001, p11) used the same work and came up with a matrix in which aspects of Shaeffer's rung were placed along the horizontal axis and specific functions along the vertical axis. Similarly the study adopted Shaeffer's ladder of participation to assess the involvement of SMC/PTAs in school management.

Below is the Shaeffer's ladder of participation with number one as the highest rank and seven as the lowest

- Participation in real decision-making at every stage –problem identification, feasibility study, planning, implementation, and evaluation;
- participation as implementation of delegated powers;
- participation in the delivery of a service, often as a partner; with other actors;
- Involvement through consultation (or feedback) on particular issues;
- involvement through the contribution (or extraction) of resources, materials, and labour;
- involvement through attendance and the receipt of information (e.g. at parents' meetings), implying passive acceptance; and
- the mere use of a service such as school

Using the above framework, the researcher assessed the level of participation of SMC/PTA from sampled schools by looking at what they do in schools that is if they are at decision making level or not.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed a number of issues that have a bearing and important implication on school management committees and parent teacher associations. The chapter has defined the concept of participation in education as any kind of contribution, input and sharing in management and development processes of the school which connotes involvement, engagement and or membership of policy and decision making organs within the schools. It has also revealed that participation in the community can be at different levels with the highest level involving empowerment to the community. The chapter has also looked at decentralization as an element in the community participation. Decentralisation has been described as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate of quasi-independent government or organisation. Decentralisation has been noted to increase efficiency in management and governance and allows faster identification of problems and search for more appropriate responses.

The literature has also revealed that devolution of functions and responsibilities should go as far as the individual schools with in mind that the increased flexibility at the school level will permit decisions to be faster and responsive to the local needs. It has also been revealed that despite the emphasis on decentralisation, there is still challenge on whether SMC/PTA members support decentralisation enough to commit

the extra time, energy and resources to make it work. Also noted in the literature is the fact that whether the SMC/PTAs have the knowledge on what is expected of them. This study will therefore find out how committed the SMC/PTAs are when executing the duties and how knowledgeable are they on their roles. The next chapter describes the research design and methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter overview

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology of the study, the sampling procedures, data generation, data analysis, credibility and trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.1 Theoretical perspectives

The theoretical perspective that guided study is pragmatism. According to Creswell (2013), pragmatism provides a philosophical basis for research. Creswell argues that; pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality , individual researchers have a freedom of choice, pragmatists do not see the world as an absolute unity, the truth is what work at that time, the researcher look at what and how to research based on the intended consequences, pragmatists agree that research always occur in social, historical, political and other contexts and pragmatist believe in an external world independent of mind as well as lodged in the mind but they believe that we need to stop asking questions about reality and the laws of nature.

3.2 Research Methodology

This study was based on mixed methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. According to Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2011), mixed methods research is formally defined as the class of research where the

researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study. This study combined quantitative and qualitative research methodology as well as techniques and approaches. The use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

3.3 Research Design

Creswell and Clark (2007) further observe that there are four major types of mixed methods design and these are; the Triangulation Design, the Embedded Design, the Explanatory Design and the Exploratory Design.

This mixed method study was looking at the effectiveness of secondary school PTAs/SMCs in school management as such a triangulation design was used. According to Creswell and Clark (2007), the intent in using triangulation design is to bring together the differing strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of quantitative methods (large sample size, trends, generalisation) with those of qualitative methods (small sample size, in depth details etc).

There are four models of Triangulation Design and these are: the convergence model, the data transformation model, the validating quantitative data model and the multilevel model (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). The model that this study used was the convergence model. This model was chosen because its purpose is to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic. The topic of this study is effectiveness of SMC/PTA in school management. By comparing the results drawn

from the quantitative data with results drawn from qualitative data, the study was expected to draw valid and well established conclusions on the problem.

3.3.1 Factors that influence Mixed Methods Strategies

Creswell (2003) gives four factors that influence the mixed method strategy and these are; implementation sequence of the quantitative and qualitative data generated in the proposed study also known as timing; priority given to the quantitative and qualitative data generated and analysis also known as weighting; the stage in which the research with the quantitative and qualitative data and findings were integrated (mixing), and the theoretical perspective to be used in the study. The following sections demonstrate how these factors have influenced the choice of mixed methods in this study.

3.1.1.1 Implementation

The data in this study was generated concurrently. According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007), concurrent timing occurs when the researcher implements both quantitative and qualitative methods during a single phase of the research study. The quantitative data and qualitative data are generated, analysed and interpreted at the same time. ‘Concurrent mixed method data collection strategies have been employed in research to converge the findings, to validate one form of data with the other form, to transform the data for comparison, or to address different types of questions’ (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.118). The use of concurrent method in this study was to converge the findings and validate qualitative data with quantitative data.

3.1.1.2 Priority

In triangulation design, equal weight is given to both data sets, however in practice, priority might be given to one or the other (Creswell 2003). Much as the study wished to give equal priority it was observed that more weight was given to qualitative data. Different data generating tools, the questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion were used and the data was analysed separately and was merged during interpretation.

3.1.1.3 Integration

Integration of the two types of data might occur at several stages; it could be during the data collection, the data analysis, interpretation, or some combination of places (Creswell 2003). In this study the data was mixed during interpretation phase.

3.4 Sampling

According to Bryman (2001), a sample is a segment of the population that is selected for investigations and the population is the universe of the units from which the sample is selected. Sampling is defined as the act, process or technique of selecting a suitable sample or a representative.

3.4.1 Target population

The population of interest in this study consisted of teachers, head teachers, SMC/PTAs and students in secondary schools of the selected districts. These individuals were targeted because they are groups of individuals who may have different experiences in school management.

3.4.2 Sampling strategy

The study was carried out in eight secondary schools which were purposively selected from Mchinji and Lilongwe districts. According to Chadwick (1984), in purposive sampling the researcher uses his or her expertise to select subjects. Much as the study was a mixed method study, it leaned more on qualitative than quantitative hence the use of purposive sampling. Some of the main factors that were taken into consideration when choosing the schools were: schools that had SMC/PTA, location of the school (i.e. whether the school is situated in the rural or urban area). This study sampled 4 schools from rural and 4 schools from urban areas. Secondary schools exist in both rural and urban areas though there may be differences in their environments. There could be some lessons drawn from the effectiveness of these SMC/PTAs that could assist in solving cross-cutting challenges. From urban location, one school was a boarding school, one school was a district day secondary school and two schools were community day secondary schools whereas in the rural location one school was a boarding school and three schools were community day secondary schools.

In each of the eight schools, four teachers were purposively sampled. The teachers selected were those who were not in PTA executive committee. Eight head teachers from the sampled schools were purposively sampled because they were the key informants of the study. The eight head teachers provided both quantitative and qualitative data. Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) argue that a clear consensus on whether same or different individuals be selected for quantitative or qualitative data does not exist however it is a common practice for researchers to select same individuals for both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Six prefects per school in six schools were purposively sampled. Purposive sampling was used because the researcher wanted the head boy and the head girl to be included in the sample. In two schools the prefects were not interviewed because in one school which is in the rural, the researcher found them writing examinations and could not wait for them because of the tight schedule she had.

In schools that had both SMC and PTA members, 4 members from the SMC and 4 members from PTA were sampled and school that had one body, a total of 8 participants from either PTA or SMC were sampled. However, some schools had more -than 8 participants and others had only two. A total of 41participants from SMC/PTA participated.

One officer from the planning section responsible for policy and planning in the ministry's headquarters was purposively sampled and a senior education methods advisor (SEMA) at CWED was also purposively sampled from the inspectorate team. The SEMA had been purposively included because they are responsible for school inspection and among the issues that they inspect is the availability of SMC/PTAs in schools. Currently, the National Education Standards (NES) guide the inspectors in assessing SMC/PTAs.

Table 1: Summary of the target population and sampling techniques

Category of Participants sampled	Sampling technique	Number of proposed Participants	Number of participants participated
Head teachers	Purposive sampling	8	8
Teachers	Purposive sampling	32	26
SMC/PTA members	Purposive sampling	64	41
Prefects	Purposive sampling	48	36
Officials from the Ministry of Education	Purposive sampling	2	2
Total number of participants		154	113

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

Table 1 shows that not all the participants participated in the study. There were various reasons for non-participation. In one school prefects did not participate because they were busy writing examination when the researcher visited the school. In the other school, the students were not told of the researchers visit. On part of SMC/PTA members, in one school SMC/PTA members were not given the questionnaire because it was difficult to find them. They stay far from the school. In other schools the number of active members did not reach 6.

3.5 Data generating methods

To generate data the study used different types of instruments namely; questionnaires, semi-structured interview guides for individual interviews and focus group discussion. Qualitative data in the study was generated by using semi-structured interview guides and Focus Group Discussions. According to Bryman (2001), semi structured interview guide has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered which guide the researcher and on the other hand the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to

reply. Using semi-structured interview in this study helped the interviewer to ask follow up questions that were not included in the guide. In order to reduce bias and subjectivity, data collected through the survey was used to offset some of the biases. Triangulation of sources and methods helped to reduce bias in the results. A total of eighteen participants were interviewed. Interviewees included one representative from Ministry of Education, one from CWED eight head teachers and 8 SMC/PTA chairpersons.

Bryman (2001) define Focus Group Discussions as the method of group interview in which there are several participants. There is an emphasis in the questioning on a particular fairly tightly defined topic. They contain elements of two methods; the group interview in which several people discuss a number of topics, and what has been called a focused interview in which the interviewees are selected because they are known to have been involved in a particular situation and are asked about that involvement. In this study the second part of the definition will matter. FGDs allow the researcher to develop an understanding about why people feel the way they do. The researcher had FGDs with SMCs/PTA members and prefects of the selected schools. FGDs with SMC/PTAs were done in 6 schools 4 in the rural and 2 in the city. Whereas FGDs with prefects were conducted in 6 schools as well 3 in city and 3 in the rural.

Questionnaire was the main instrument for generating quantitative data. According to De Vaus (2002) as cited in Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2003), a questionnaire is a data collection instrument which includes all techniques of data in which each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in predetermined orders. This

study used a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was physically given to head teachers of sampled schools who in turn gave the questionnaire to the concerned participants for completion. The researcher sent the questionnaire through the head teacher because some of the respondents like SMCs and PTAs were always in the school. A total of 72 questionnaires were administered to participants who comprised of 8 head teachers, 32 teachers and 32 SMC/PTA members however 54 participants responded to the questionnaires as highlighted in table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Data Collection Tools

Category of Participants	Number to respond to questionnaire	Actual Questionnaire respondent	Number to be interviewed	Actual no interviewed	Number to participate in FGDs	Actual no of FGDs participants	Total
SMC/PTA	32	20	8	8	64	41	64
Teachers	32	26	0		0	0	32
Head teachers	8	8	8	8	0	0	8 head teachers responded to both questionnaires and interview
Prefects	0		0		48	36	48
Officials from Ministry of Education	0		2	2	0		2
Total	72	54	18	18	112	77	154

Source: Researcher recorded data

3.5.1 Challenges faced during data generation

The questionnaire was supposed to be administered to 72 participants however only 54 responded. Likewise, instead of having 112 participants in FDGs, there were only 77 participants. In some schools the responses given by the PTAs and Prefects on the same issues were contradictory. It was hard to contact PTA members in city schools because of their other commitments. Some participants did not respond to some question in the questionnaire for reasons known by themselves. In some schools prefects were not interviewed due to school schedule. The weakness of the questionnaire was mitigated with the use of interviews.

3.6 Data analysis

Traditionally, as noted by Creswell and Clark (2007), “Data analysis in mixed methods research consists of analysing the quantitative data using quantitative methods and the qualitative data using qualitative methods”. In this study therefore, the quantitative data was analysed using quantitative methods and qualitative data was analysed using qualitative methods. The analysis of data was based on procedures as highlighted by Creswell and Clark (2007). For both quantitative and qualitative data, the following procedures were followed; preparing the data for analysis, exploring the data, analysing the data, representing the data for analysis and validating the data

3.6.1 Quantitative data analysis

According to Somekh and Lewin, (2005, p337),

“Quantitative data analysis is a technical process which has become increasingly sophisticated in recent years with the advent of powerful computer software. SPSS is the obvious starting point if you want to use quantitative methods.”

3.6.1.1 Preparing the data for analysis

The data generated from the questionnaire was coded by assigning numeric values to each response, data entry errors were cleaned from the data base, and then new variables were recoded or computed for computer analysis using a computer package known as Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

3.6.1.2 Analysing the data

The data was analysed using a computer package known as Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Results from the analysis have been presented in summary form whereas various tables have been generated from the analysis. And these tables are mostly frequency tables though some tables are cross tabulations.

3.6.1.3 Validating the data

Validity serves the purpose of checking on the quality of the data and the results. Bryman (2001), recognised three criteria for evaluating a social research. One of the criteria is validity and the other two are reliability and replication. Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research. This can be achieved through careful sampling, use of appropriate instruments, and appropriate statistical treatments (Cohen et al 2005). In order to

validate the data, the instrument was pretested before use in 2 schools, it was checked by my supervisor and the data collection was done by the researcher herself. The data was analysed using SPSS.

3.6.1 Qualitative data analysis

According to Somekh and Lewin (2005, p338),

“Qualitative data analysis is often a two-stage process of (1) making analytic memos in a research diary or field notebook and (2) undertaking a more systematic process of fragmenting the data and attaching concept labels to each separate piece as a first step in the construction of theory or ‘interrogating’ data to search for answers to questions and evidence to either support or refute emerging theories”.

In this study therefore, documents were organised for review, texts from the interviews were transcribed and transcriptions were checked for accuracy by re-reading the texts several times. The data was read to develop a general understanding of the data base. Short memos were written from the field notes.

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, (2005), data analysis means organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data; in short, making sense of the data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. Typically in qualitative research, data analysis commences during the data collection process.

The analysis of qualitative data in this study followed a seven step data analysis sequence according to Cohen et al.(2005), got started with establishing units of

analysis of the data, indicating how these units are similar to and different from each other. The second step was to create a domain analysis which involves grouping the units into domains, clusters, groups, patterns, themes and coherent sets to form domains. The third step involved establishing relationships and linkages between the domains. This process according to Cohen et al. ensures that the data, their richness and 'context-groundedness' are retained. The next step was to make speculative inferences. This is an important stage, for it moves the research from description to inference (Cohen et al. 2005). The fifth step was summarizing. This was done based on the research findings. The sixth step was seeking negative and discrepant cases. Cohen et al. (2005) argue that in theory generation it is important to seek not only confirming cases but to weigh the significance of discontinuing cases. Lastly, the seventh step was theory generation in which Cohen et al. (2005), argue that theory derives from the data-it is grounded in the data and emerges from it.

3.6.2 Validating the data

Validity in qualitative research is focused on whether the account provided by the researcher and the participants is accurate, can be trusted and is credible. According to Cohen et al. (2005), validity can be reached through honesty, depth richness, and scope of data achieved, the participants approach, the extent of objectivity of the researcher. Qualitative validation strategies were used in the study where the results of the study were taken back to the key participants to verify if the findings were reflecting their experiences. Different methods were used to some participants on the same subjects (like interviews and questionnaires), as such, triangulation was used to confirm the results obtained.

3.6.3 Merging quantitative and qualitative data

According to Creswell and Clark (2007), in a concurrent data analysis there are two stages involved when doing the analysis and these are; separate data analysis for quantitative and qualitative data, and merging the quantitative and qualitative data. Two techniques are available for merging the two data sets. These are; transforming one type of data to make the qualitative and quantitative comparable, comparing the data sets without transformation through discussion or a matrix. In this study the two data sets were compared without transformation through discussion by examining the similarities of the quantitative and qualitative data results.

The data generating instruments were piloted in two schools one in the urban and one in the rural area within Lilongwe. This assisted in testing the data for reliability and validity. The data generating instruments were adjusted based on the results of the pilot study

3.7 Ethical consideration

The study was conducted in accordance with research ethics by ensuring that the respondents' responses were treated with utmost confidentiality and that the respondents were not obliged to disclose their names to researcher. Rossman and Rallis (2003) argue that confidentiality protect privacy of the respondents. Use of recording instruments was used upon obtaining permission of the interviewees. The respondents were provided with a background to the study in order to eliminate uncertainties or suspicions.

According to Creswell (2013), attention needs to be directed towards ethical issues prior to conducting the study, begging the study, during data collection and analysis, and in reporting, sharing and storing the data. Before carrying out the study in the sampled schools, permission from Education division was granted. Participants were informed about the nature of the study and provided consent. The informed consent of the participants facilitated their willingness to participate in the study or withdraw if they needed to. Cohen et al. (2005) argue that social scientists generally have a responsibility not only to their profession in its search for knowledge and quest for truth, but also for the subjects they depend on for their work. Whatever the specific nature of their work, social researchers must take into account the effects of the research on participants, and act in such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings. The researcher did not ask the participants their names during Focus Group Discussions.

The data was also kept on the secure place which was accessible to the researcher only. The data that was collected was not shared with anyone else and was kept for academic use only. During data analysis, school names and names of participants were not disclose

3.8 Limitation of the study

This study aimed at establishing the effectiveness of SMC/PTA in governance and management of secondary schools based on the Ministry of Education policy and legislation, a country-wide study would have given a realistic picture on the status of SMC/PTAs, however, financial resources did not allow for such a study and therefore

this study will only contribute to other similar studies conducted in other regions within the country.

3.9 Chapter summary

The study used a mixed method approach where both qualitative data and quantitative data were collected. Data generating tools for qualitative data were semi- structure interviews in which individual interview and focus group discussion were administered. Data generating tool for quantitative data were questionnaires. The sample comprised of members of SMC/PTA head teachers, teachers students and officials from ministry of education and officials from the education division. The next chapter discusses results.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Chapter overview

The focus of this chapter is the presentation and discussion of the findings of the study. The study has answered four research questions in order to explore the effectiveness of SMC/PTAs in local governance and management of secondary schools. The first part of this chapter focuses on the first research question which looks into how SMC/PTAs are involved in management of school revenue. The second part focuses on the role of SMC/PTAs in the infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation. The third part focuses on the role of SMC/PTAs in the monitoring of quality of learning in schools. Finally, the chapter looks into the involvement of SMC/PTAs in development, implementation and monitoring of school improvement plans. However, before discussing the four research questions, this chapter will discuss what SMC/PTAs know about their roles and responsibilities. The schools under discussion have been identified by letters from A to H for ethical reasons. Table 3 gives the description of the schools.

Table 3: Schools under study

SCHOOL	DISTRICT	TYPE
A	Lilongwe urban	Community Day Secondary School (CDSS)
B	Mchinji	CDSS with boarding facilities
C	Mchinji	District Boarding secondary school
D	Mchinji	CDSS
E	Mchinji	CDSS with boarding facilities but not offering meals
F	Lilongwe urban	National Boarding secondary school
G	Lilongwe urban	District Day secondary school
H	Lilongwe urban	CDSS

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities of SMC/PTA

SMC/PTA members were asked of their roles and responsibilities through interviews and focus group discussion. PTAs and SMCs in different schools gave varying responses. The findings show that school A had PTA only and members stated that the roles and responsibility of PTA were: initiating development activities, looking at teachers and students' welfare, handling students discipline cases, they were a bridge between teachers and students, and were responsible for monitoring school finances. School B had both PTA and SMC. PTA members said that their roles were to monitor punctuality of both teachers and students, and organising parent teacher meetings whereas one member from SMC said:

“Our roles are to check the implementation of development activities, monitor punctuality of students, check on absenteeism, monitoring enrolment of students and monitoring the availability of teaching and learning materials.”

In this school SMC and PTA members knew their roles and with what they knew they could participate effectively if there were no barriers. School C had PTA only and the members pointed out that their roles and responsibilities were to monitor the nutritional diet of the school, monitoring and maintenance of buildings, initiating development activities and lobbying for funds for school activities, assisting teachers in disciplining students and monitoring if the teachers are teaching. In this school again members know their roles and responsibilities.

School D had both PTA and SMCs and they indicated that their roles and responsibilities were to plan for development activities, work hand in hand with administration and call for development activities. School E had PTA only and the members outlined their roles and responsibilities as representing parents in the school, initiating development activities, discipline management and maintaining school infrastructure. PTA members in school F indicated that the roles and responsibilities of PTA were to look into the welfare of the child, provide food to boarders, play an advisory role to school administrators and maintenance of teachers' houses.

In school G, the PTA members reported that their roles focused on the interest of a learner. They encouraged punctuality and discipline of students, they lobbied for more teachers and recommended posting of misbehaving teachers. Lastly in school H, PTA members pointed out that their roles and responsibilities included maintaining school infrastructure, procuring furniture for students, employing support staff and monitoring how the support worked, and monitored and initiated construction of school infrastructure. School H had not exhausted all the activities. However in all the schools, the committee members had not mentioned all their responsibilities.

MoEST (2014) has outlined roles and responsibilities to be undertaken by different stakeholders. These stakeholders include SMC, PTA and Head teachers. According to MoEST (2015), awareness of responsibilities by SMC/BOGs has been put as minimum standard in school governance

From what has been observed above, the findings suggest that SMC/PTA members partially knew what they are supposed to do as office bearers. Although in the majority of schools interviewed members cited correct roles and responsibilities, there was no consistency in their answers signalling that members may not have been briefed on their roles and responsibilities. MoEST (2004) recommends that all communities be empowered to participate in the management of their schools through awareness of their roles and responsibilities. This should be through sensitisation and should focus on roles of SMCs and PTAs and how this impacts on quality of education. This study therefore has noted that the committees are not empowered as per Ministry of Education expectation.

The researcher therefore went further to enquire if SMCs/PTAs were trained, hence the following section presents findings on training.

4.1.2 Training

Qualitative interviews with SMC/PTAs in schools under investigation provided information on whether they were trained and who provided the training. Table 4 summarises the responses.

Table 4 : Status of training for SMC/PTA members

School	Status of training	Who trained them
A	Trained	Officials from MoEST, Central West Education Division.
B	Trained	Non-Governmental Organisation, Plan International
C	Not trained	Were given some verbal instruction by division
D	Not trained	
E	Trained	MoEST, Primary Education Advisor
F	Not trained	Regularly attend meetings by organised by division
G	Not trained	Were given a document to read
H	Trained	Officials from education division

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

From the table 4, in 4 schools SMC/PTA members were not given any training and hence are not empowered to participate in school management effectively. Though the picture coming out of the enquiry on their roles and responsibilities seems much better than the results coming up on training section, it is clear from table 4 that members who have not been trained have learned the roles and responsibilities through interactions. These interactions include briefings, instructions and through meetings they attend. These may not be adequate for the members of the SMCs/PTAs to perform their tasks effectively. Roles of monitoring and oversight are often times challenging and therefore thorough training needs to be given to the school committees for better and more informed participation. Also noted was the fact that SMC/PTAs from different schools were trained by different trainers as such the message taken to them differed for example a chair person of school B reported that he was advised by his trainers to remain in the committee for as long as possible for continuity of projects. Training materials from other trainers target their objectives whereas trainer from MoEST use documents from MoEST. However, a study conducted in Zimbabwe by Nyandoro et al. (2013) revealed that lack of knowledge of

the roles as outlined in the statutory guideline, was affecting school development committees in their effectiveness in financial management hence it is important for committee members to be trained.

4.1.3 Tenure of Office

Table 5 gives summary of tenure of office for SMC/PTA, and how long they have been in the office. This information will help to see how these bodies comply with the policies.

Table 5: Tenure of office for SMC/PTA members

School	Number. of years in office		Tenure of office	
	PTA	SMC	PTA	SMC
A	More than 3 years		3 years	
B	More than 5 years	More than 20 years	3 years	3years
C	More than 5 years		3years	
D	More than 5years		3 years	
E	More than 5years	More than 5years	3 years	3 years
F	More than 5 years		3 years	
G	More than 12 years		3 years	
H	More than 12 years		3 years	

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

While NGOs may provide the advice on different areas, they do not have to advise against what policy prescribes. Such a situation may arise if the SMCs/PTAs are not monitored by the Ministry. As reported by SMC chairperson of school B who said that;

“I have been the chairperson of the school committee for this long because I was advised by those who trained us that we should continue to be in the school committee for continuity of the current projects in the school”

This SMC chairperson has been holding the post for more than 20 years. PTA members for school number H have been in the office for more than 12 years. When asked about the availability of their wards in the school since 12 years was equivalent to three secondary school cycles, the PTA chairperson said that he had grand children in the school. This PTA member did not know the required term of office which is 3 years as stated by MoEST (2004) where an SMC/PTA member should be in the office for 3 years.

4.2 Involvement of SMC/PTAs in the management of school level revenue

This section will focus on how SMC/PTAs are involved in the management of school level revenue. It will focus on their knowledge on amount and the use of fees collected, their involvement in annual budget preparations, their involvement in Internal procurement committee and involvement in boarding activities.

Evidence from interviews revealed that revenues found in schools come from students as school fees and from the government as other recurrent Transaction (ORT) fund. There are several types of fees collected, tuition which is deposited into government account number1, School development fund (SDF), parent teacher association (PTA) fund, general purpose fund (GPF) textbook revolving fund (TRF) boarding fee and other fees depending on the school. Therefore this section will discuss whether SMC/PTAs are monitoring these funds. In order to determine whether they are monitoring the funds, the discussion will base on their knowledge on fees collected, how they access information on fees collected and what the fees is used for.

4.2.1 Knowledge on fees collection

The study found that out of 54 respondents, 83% had knowledge where as 17% did not know.

Table 6: Knowledge of SMC/PTAs on amount of fees collected in schools

Respondent	Yes	No	Total
Head teachers	8	0	8
SMC/PTAs	20	0	20
Teachers	17	9	26
Total	45	9	54
Percentage	83.3%	16.7	100%

Source: Data from SPSS tables created by researcher (2015)

Based on the results in table 6, all head teachers and SMC/PTAs in the sample knew how much fees was collected in schools however 16.7% of respondents who were mostly teachers were not aware of how much fees was collected in schools. The knowledge that SMC/PTA have on fees collected is essential because it promotes transparency and accountability. Interviews and FGDs with SMC/PTA members, indicated different responses from different schools which implied that SMC/PTA members had some knowledge on how much fees was collected. In school A the PTA members were able to tell what the fees per student was and were able to track the use of what they were told was the PTA fund which according to them was in agreement with the enrolment of the students. In school B the chairman of SMC stated:

“I ask the head teacher how much they have collected and being a signatory of the school account I am able to check the balance from the revenue book”

Likewise in the other 6 schools SMC/PTA members confirmed that they knew how much their schools collected as school fees. The importance of SMC/PTA members

knowing the amount of fees collected is that it helps governing the use of funds for intended purposes such as buying of school books. This was also an argument raised in the Coleman studies(2003) carried out in England, Wales, and Canada as cited in Nyandoro et al., (2013) which revealed that with the help of SMCs, schools could easily direct its funds to meet its perceived needs and could make quick responses where necessary. MoEST (2013) encourage SMCs to monitor reports that relate to collection and use of revenue.

It is not enough just to know about how much the school collects but also about how the information is shared. Table 7 shows how schools accessed information on fees collected.

Table 7: Ways of accessing information on fees collected

School	Location of the school	Way of accessing information
A	Urban	Through meetings
B	Rural	PTA chair signatory to the school account, ask for enrolment and how much fees is collected from the Head teacher. Documents made available to PTA members
C	Rural	Through Meetings
D	Rural	Through PTA chair who is a signatory. They use fees book to have more information.
E	Rural	Through meetings
F	Urban	Through Meetings
G	Urban	PTA chair signatory of school account. Account documents made available to PTA
H	Urban	Through meetings

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

From Table 7, the findings show that 3 schools have PTA members as signatories of school bank accounts and in these schools accounts documents are available for PTA members. These 3 schools have delegated some power to the PTAs and based on Shaeffer's ladder of participation their participation level is at level 2 which should be encouraged. The other schools have not involved the PTAs due to the directive from Ministry of Education which discourages PTA members from being signatories. Despite the discouragement, schools that have PTA members as signatories, pass the information to other members. Involving PTA/SMCs as signatories has got its own merits. It brings ownership of the school to the community however it is worth noting that unlike in primary schools where SMC and PTA chairpersons are signatories to school bank accounts, revised guidelines for management of fees retained in secondary schools do not encourage SMC/PTAs to be signatories in secondary schools.

When an official from planning section at Ministry of Education was asked as to why PTA/SMCs should not be signatories, the official had this to say;

“According to the public accounts act, a person who is not a public officer should not be a signatory. It is easier to recover the money from a public officer when money is embezzled than from someone who does not work in the government”

Though being signatories of bank accounts has enabled the members of SMC/PTAs acquire information, it is illegal and therefore these committees need other ways of getting this information.

Furthermore, the study revealed that another way in which schools access information is through spot checks of financial documents. School G which has a PTA member as a signatory to the bank account has the treasurer who regularly checks accounts records. The treasurer is professionally an auditor. The head teacher expressed happiness with this development as it is beneficial to the school. In this case the treasurer is instrumental in the schools development since his findings during the regular spot checks have added value to the school’s decision making process as expressed by the head teacher who sees it as beneficial. The reports of this member inform other members on school fees. In absence of training as reported in table 4, the school has benefitted from its inclusion of professionals within the cadre of the PTA. The most common way of accessing information is through meetings. In 5 schools the SMC/PTA members get information during meetings where they were either told how much the school collected or are served with expenditure reports.

In school F which is in the urban area, a PTA treasurer said that she was physically counting students to tally the figures they were given with actual enrolment. This PTA

member said that she was once a head teacher of a secondary school so she knew how financial transactions were conducted. Probably she did not want to be cheated. This did not please some members in the administration of the school because, as stated by the head teacher, they feared that the PTA members would demand more sitting allowances if they knew the actual amount of fees collected. The school therefore does not disclose the funding which the school gets from government for fear of PTAs demands. The head teacher's argument is not in line with National Education Standard (NES) 26 on financial management that require the school to account for the funds it manages. Table 8 summarises the findings on how information is accessed

Table 8: Ways of accessing information

Ways of Accessing information	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Through PTA meetings	26	61.9
Through head teacher during staff meetings	10	23.8
Through displays on notice board	2	4.8
Other	4	9.5
Total no, of respondents	42	100

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

Table 8 shows that 62% of the respondents indicated that they knew how much fees is collected through meetings. Of the 5 schools that use meetings as a means of accessing information, 3 schools are from urban. According to the theoretical framework guiding the study, using meetings as a way of accessing information implies passive involvement and as such, SMC/PTAs cannot effectively do their work if they depend on meetings as a source of information. Staff may be selective in the information they provide. An example is in school A where the headmistress reported that students were paying K3000 as PTA fund of which K1000 was at PTAs disposal

whilst a PTA member thinks K1000 is the only amount which was collected as PTA fund. Through discussions with SMC/PTA members in school B, it was revealed that few of PTA members knew the amount of fees collected. These were members who had interest and made enquiries. Getting the information through meetings is therefore not adequate in ensuring accountability of the funds but SMC/PTA should do spot checks to validate this information.

In school E which is in the rural area, PTA members were told what the school was expected to collect per academic year, however, the actual collections were not revealed to the SMC members. In school H which is in the city, PTA members were only concerned with PTA and SDF funds only. This is not in line with education decentralization where parents who contribute to school financing have the right to know how these funds are spent. They are mandated to monitor all the revenue collected in school (MoEST 2015, MoEST 2013).

From the discussions above, the most common way of accessing information was through meetings out of the 8 schools 5 schools were using meetings as the source of information. Based on Shaeffer ladder of participation, this is level 6 which is a low level. This method is not aggressive enough to probe more on how revenue is being managed.

4.2.2 Knowledge on Use of fees collected

It is not enough just to know how much fees is collected but how it is used. As earlier stated in Chapter 2, SMC/PTA has the mandate to monitor the collection and the use of fees. This section wanted to find out how SMC/PTA monitored the expenditure of revenue collected in school. Table 9 shows results on this issue.

Table 9: Knowledge on Use of fees collected

Respondent	Yes	No	Total	% yes
Head teachers	8	0	8	100%
SMC/PTAs	19	0	19	100%
Teachers	16	9	25	64%
Total	43	9	52	86.7%

Source: Data from SPSS tables created by researcher (2015)

Table 9 show that SMC/PTAs were aware of how the fees collected was used. The schools, however, varied on how they monitored the use of fees.

Through interviews with head teacher and PTA members, in school A it was observed that PTA fund used was different from what was reported to the PTA members. When asked about this, the head teacher reported that;

“I am new in the system and do not know how finances are managed. I have not gone for any training.”

This again is another challenge for the effectiveness of PTAs. Change of administration can have an impact on how SMC/PTA members perform their duties. While transitions of personnel may be inevitable, handover notes serve to familiarize

the incoming personnel on the situation in the school. In this school the author rated participation level at 6 where members were involved through receipt of information. According to the head teacher of school B, PTA members did not monitor the use of fees collected because members lacked capacity. In this particular school, which is in the rural area, the limiting factor was the level of education of the PTA members. During focus group discussions it was revealed that it was only the chairperson of PTA who sometimes had access to the books. He was the only member who was active. This shows that participation of members at this school as far as revenue is concerned was at a lower level (level 6) where involvement is only through attendance and receipt of information. In schools A, C, D and H, PTA members were only interested in PTA and SDF funds. For these funds, they were able to trace all the revenue that was collected according to what they knew as fee per student. Here again the PTA was not carrying out its role efficiently because instead of monitoring the use of all the funds, their interest was on SDF and PTA fund only. Based on Shaeffer ladder for analysis of participation this school is at level 4 where involvement is through consultation on particular issues. Committee members were obliged to ensure that the GPF and other fees were being used for the intended purpose and not abused.

In school E which is from rural, the findings revealed that school management team stopped PTA members from monitoring revenue expenditure because of mistrust. They alleged that members wanted to borrow from school if they knew how much money the school had. This again shows inefficiency on how the PTAs were working. They did not know what their role was on school management. In this school PTA members were not involved at all as a result they were at level 7 as far as Shaeffer ladder for analysis of participation is concerned.

In both conventional schools in the urban school F and G, it was reported that some PTA members and not all, were able to check payment vouchers and expenditure reports and reported to others. In these schools, the committee members are educated as such they were involved through delivery of service which was monitoring of school documents as such they can be placed at level 3 on the ladder of participation. This is a higher level which needs to be encouraged for PTAs to participate effectively.

The revised guidelines have not included PTA members to be signatories to the school account and according to the head teacher of school number 6 this had frustrated some PTA members and were not as active as they were before. It was also noted that in one school the PTA members had no access to accounts records.

Based on the findings of the study from both qualitative and quantitative data, it can be concluded that SMC/PTA members have some knowledge on how much fees is collected. They know this through mostly meetings which are not the most efficient way of getting information. These SMC/PTA members were mostly interested in monitoring the use of PTA or SDF fund as evidenced by 4 of the 8 schools under study. This means that SMC/PTAs in secondary schools are not empowered like those in primary schools to monitor the school funds. While SMC/PTA members are not allowed to sign financial documents in secondary schools, PSIP Financial Management Guidelines empowers primary school SMC/PTAs to be signatories of the same. This inconsistency can be a cause of problems of trust between SMC/PTAs and school administrators. The two schools that had some member of PTA monitor the school revenue were from Urban. These two schools had members who were

educated and were able to follow issues. It is worth noting that some PTA/SMCs were sometimes discouraged from monitoring by the school administration and some members did not monitor because they lacked capacity due to levels of education.

In general, based on the researcher, SMC/PTAs knowledge on use of fees collected, is at level 4 based on Sheaffer's ladder of participation which is involvement through consultation on particular issues.

4.2.3 Involvement of SMC/PTA in annual budget preparation

The study therefore asked participants comprising of head teachers, teachers, and SMC/PTAs on how SMC/PTAs were involved in the preparation of annual budget estimates.

Table 10 shows how different participants responded to the question on involvement of SMC/PTAs in budget preparations.

Table 10: Involvement of SMC/PTA members in budget preparations

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	35	77.8
No	10	22.2
Total	45	100

Source Data from SPSS tables created by the researcher (2015)

There were 45 participants who responded to this question, 78% of the respondents indicated that SMC/PTAs were involved in preparations of annual budgets where as 22% stated that they were not involved. This response does not tell much on how the

members are involved. However, through interview with head teachers it was revealed in school A that, the school management team and the PTA members, budget for PTA funds together, this is done after collection of PTA fund. This was supported by what the PTA members said, who reported. For instance, they stated that they “budget for construction projects in the school”. The head teacher of school B said that SMC/PTA members contributed only to activities that involved the use of boarding fees and school development funds and not the other funds. In addition, it revealed that it was only the PTA which was involved in budgeting because the PTA chairman was a member of budget team. In school C, the head teacher pointed out that;

“PTA members are not fully involved in budget preparations, but they make budgets based on SDF and PTA funds they expected to collect.”

This is in agreement with what PTA members said that they budgeted for revenue collected at school but not the ORT.

In school D, both the PTA members and the head teacher confirmed that the chairperson of PTA was involved in preparation of the budget. This is a positive development because SMC/PTAs were involved in decision making especially planning for expected revenue. In school E, according to the head teacher, PTA members informed the school what they wanted to do with school development fund, and budgeting was done by the school management team. SMC/PTA members said that they were not part of the budget committee but planned on their own for expected SDF funds and later submitted to the school management team.

In school F, according to the deputy head teacher, PTA members previously used to budget for PTA fund on termly basis but this stopped due to change in the head teacher (management). However, interview with the PTA member indicated that some members were in the budget committee. In school G, both the Head teacher and the PTA chairperson confirmed that PTA members were not involved in budget preparations. In school H, however, PTA members budgeted after collecting fees. This is done on termly basis.

These findings suggest that SMC/PTAs are not fully involved in budget preparations as evidenced by 5 schools being involved in budgeting of only few areas notably PTA, SDF and boarding fee in some cases. They were also expected to be involved in budgeting of ORT, Text book Revolving Fund and General Purpose Fund. They therefore did not meet the minimum requirements prescribed in the NES (17). These schools can be placed at level 4 on Shaeffer ladder for analysis of participation, being involvement through consultation (or feedback) on particular issues. Also noted is that 2 schools are at level 7 of Shaeffer ladder for analysis of participation.

These schools are not involved in budget preparations. It is only one school that prepares the whole budget with the PTA. According to guidelines on fees retention, revenue collected in institutions should be reflected in budget estimates that will be approved by the Parliament (MoEST, 2013). Each school is therefore expected to produce a revenue budget which reflects the activities that are expected to be carried out in that financial year. According to National Education Standard 26, SMC/BoG/PTA should participate in budget preparation and they should fully

understand and approve it (MoEST, 2015). This is set as a minimum requirement for a school to show that there is effective financial management.

In general, schools are not adequately involved in budget preparations. According to Shaefer's ladder of participation, their involvement would be rated at level 4 which is partial involvement in particular issues.

4.2.4 Involvement of SMC/PTA in Internal Procurement Committee (IPC)

Guidelines on fees retention in government schools require that schools should include at least a member of SMC/PTA in Internal Procurement Committee (IPC). An IPC is the body responsible for controlling and approving procurement activities within the procurement entity. Procurement entity is a term used to define all government bodies involved in procurement. In this case, the procurement entity is the school. Most abuse of funds happen during procurement process, hence the need for accountability institutions to monitor closely the procurement process.

When asked about the existence of IPCs, 86% of those who responded to this question said that IPC existed in their schools whereas 14% indicated that they did not. However, interviews with head teachers and SMC/PTA members indicated that all the 8 schools had IPCs. The evidence from the interviews with both head teachers and PTA members revealed that only 3 schools had included PTA members in the IPC. Of the 3 schools that had PTA members, head teacher of school H, stated:

“IPC is there on paper only, it is not functional. Teaching and learning materials are purchased by the heads of department whereas construction materials are purchased by PTA members.”

The statement suggests that procurement procedures are not followed in this particular school. However there is some involvement in procurement of construction materials though not procedural.

The head teacher and one PTA member in school D revealed that, the school had two members from SMC/PTA in the IPC. One SMC member was the secretary of IPC and one PTA member was just a committee member. The head teacher stated that;

“IPC minutes are kept by the secretary of the IPC who is a member of SMC and they are involved in procurement at this school”.

In this school PTA members were involved in procurement through the IPC. The third school that had PTA membership in the IPC is school E. The head teacher of this school indicated that there was one PTA member who assisted in procurement of different things at the school and he was also responsible for paying support staff.

However, in school F, there were different responses. The head teacher, the school had not included PTAs as members of IPC because some SMC/PTA members previously were demanding sitting allowances for every meeting. On the other hand the PTA member said that 2 PTA members were part of the IPC. This could mean that though the PTAs believed that they were in the IPC, they were not involved in decision making.

Based on the findings of the study, it is in only 3 schools out of the 8 where SMC/PTA members were part of the IPC. This indicates that in most of the schools, SMC/PTA members are not in IPC. In 3 schools in which SMC/PTA members were in IPC, in one school the level of participation according to Sheafers Ladder of

participation, is at 4 this is so because the PTA members are involved in the procurement of construction materials. In the other two schools, it is at level 3 because in one school the member keeps the IPC minutes and is involved in procurement and in the other school different things are purchased by the PTA members. Therefore, in general, involvement of PTA/SMC in Internal Procurement committee would be rated 7 because it is only 3 schools out of the 8 who are involved and in one school the PTA members are just used in procurement but not as IPC members.

4.2.5 Involvement of SMCs/PTAs in boarding activities

In the year 2000, the Ministry of education came up with a policy document called Policy Investment Framework (PIF) which was used as a basic working tool for various education sub sectors. According to (PIF), boarding schools should have boarding committees. According to guidelines on fees retention in government schools, the chairperson of PTA/SCM is expected to be a member of boarding committee. The PIF outlined the roles of a boarding committee as: championing the development of boarding facilities in the school; recommending for approval the revision of boarding fees to the Minister based on prevailing economic environment where the school is located; monitoring purchases of boarding facilities and food stuffs; monitoring the quality and quantity of food served to students; preparing budget for boarding and submitting the same to the management team.

One of the notable changes in the policies, was the withdrawal of support to secondary school boarding facilities, as a result the cost of running boarding schools was left to parents. The Government set the boarding fees at 1,500 Malawi Kwacha

per student per term. This fee has not been revised for a long time despite depreciation of Malawi kwacha over the years. Without support from government the amount is too small to sustain the cost of boarding expenses. SMC/PTAs have played a role in adjusting the fees in order to support the boarding expenses.

Four of the schools that were under study were boarding schools. When asked if the PTA members were included in boarding committees, head teachers in three (3) of the 4 sampled boarding schools indicated that PTA members were included in the boarding committees and in one school the head teacher said that the school did not have a boarding committee. When asked how they were involved in boarding activities, the study found variations in their roles. In school E, the role of PTA was to monitor girls' hostels. One of the school committee members said; "this school does not provide meals to students it only gives them accommodation but as members of school committee we regularly visit the hostels to check on their security". In school F PTA provided supplementary funds to top up on what was provided for by the government. In this school the findings show that PTA members were needed only when the school required supplementary food.

In school B, the findings indicate that the PTA and SMC members were physically involved in inspection of the kitchen to make sure that food given to the students was of good quality and they also monitored if the school had sufficient food and if the boarding master was working. This committee worked hard because the members were encouraged by the non-government organisation working in the area. In school C, the PTA members monitor meals and appreciate especially to see if there is need for more funds.

The study therefore found that , in the 2 of the 3 schools that had boarding committees, involvement of PTA members was partial which can be rated at level 4 on Shaefer ladder of participation. The members were basically used by the school management team when more food was required. Whereas in one school (School 2) the level of participation would be rated 2 because members are doing more including monitoring the boarding. In general involvement of PTA/SMCs in boarding activities can be rated 4.

4.2.6 Role of Ministry of Education in monitoring the implementation of fees retention guidelines

When an official from Central West Education Division was asked how often they conducted monitoring exercises, the officer said

“I came to this office last year, the office has not conducted any monitoring exercise because it has only one vehicle which is always busy with other elands.”

When the same question was put to an officer from MoEST, she admitted that the monitoring was weak.

According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002), policy implementation requires the active participation of policy managers and their organisations. They further argue that monitoring provide feedback for day to day operations, and short term adaptations, as well as informing the vision for reaching the long term policy reform goals. Lack of monitoring exercises therefore may have an impact on how schools perform especially on implementation of policies. MoEST (2013) (fees retention guidelines), encourage officers from MoEST and Education Division that from time

to time they should undertake monitoring activities in education institutions to examine and assess performance in accordance with their mandate.

4.3 Roles of SMC/PTA in infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation

When head teachers were asked about the availability of these guidelines in schools, the findings showed varied responses. The responses differed because head teachers from 2 schools said that they were new in the office and did not know about these guidelines. This shows that either there were no handover notes between the head teachers or the new head teacher did not use the notes. According to MoEST (2014b), policies should be included in handover for smooth running of the school. The other 6 schools said that they knew about the guidelines but did not use them. All the schools under study could not produce a copy of the guidelines despite some insisting that the document was “somewhere in the office”. This indicated that record keeping in these schools was poor. Records in school give vital information for decision making (MoEST 2014b). When SMC/PTA members were asked the same question, only SMC/PTA from school E had the document but did not use it. When asked how they came in possession of these guidelines, the PTA chairperson of school E had this to say; “we attended a meeting in at Mchinji secondary school where we were given these guidelines. The rest showed ignorance of having such document.

When asked how they monitored the school infrastructure, the findings revealed different responses. In school A, PTA members did not monitor because they were busy with their daily work. In school B, D and E PTA members were always in the school and able to notice where maintenance was required. In school C the PTA said that the school reported to them whenever there was need for maintenance and

generally it was the school administration that did the maintenance with authorisation from PTA. School number F, PTA members waited for the school to report and for them they only do maintenance of teachers' houses. In school G and H the study found that PTA monitored school infrastructure but without following specific guidelines. In school G, the head teacher explained that their school was painted as a result of the monitoring exercise that took place in August 2014.

The findings suggest that the, schools have not kept guidelines on infrastructure management. Guidelines on infrastructure management place SMC as responsible for carrying out needs assessment when dealing with infrastructure management. The absence of these guidelines deprives SMC/PTAs knowledge on how they should function. SMC/PTAs members were not monitoring as per expectation. Therefore, their involvement in monitoring of infrastructure was minimal (level 7 of Sheaffer's ladder of participation).

4.3.1 Construction of new infrastructure

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, SMC/PTA members are expected to provide new infrastructure in institutions. Out of the 8 schools that were sampled, 6 schools had either completed a project or had one in progress. Table 11 gives a summary of projects taking place in these institutions.

Table 11: Summary of construction projects in the sampled schools

School	Project	Progress
1	Construction of administration block	Not yet finished but being used
2	No project	Have bricks for construction of teachers houses
3	Construction of 2 teachers houses	Done to plaster level and funds available
4	Have constructed 2 classroom blocks and a library within a period of 3 years	
5	1 teacher's house and girls hostels	Done
6	None	Plan to construct teachers houses
7	Holding block	Not complete but is being used. No funds available
8	Construction of administration block	done up to wiring level

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

Based on the data in Table 11, SMC/PTAs are taking a great role in construction of school infrastructure. Even those schools that recorded no infrastructure development have either got plans in place for something or have started preparations for the construction. Notable outstanding examples are schools D and H.

In School D, the study found that the school was running on borrowed premises but currently have four classrooms, a library and an administration block which have been constructed within the period of 3 years using PTA funds and lobbying in different organisations. School D had both SMC and PTA. School H constructed a modern administration block using PTA and school development funds and the chairperson proudly said that after completion of the block they would start constructing teachers' houses. One of the prefects in school H said that, "I often see the chairperson of the

school committee around the construction site. But I do not know who the other PTA members are". This indicated that it was only the PTA chair person who was active.

When asked how involved they were in monitoring of these projects, different schools responded differently. In school B, the chairperson of SMC said that PTA/SMC members monitored construction projects. They gave each other turns for monitoring. However they said that they were not trained on how to conduct the work but they still monitored the works. In school C, the members had a duty roster for monitoring, previously each member would be assigned a responsibility but this did not work because some members were lazy. In school G, the PTA members were not directly involved in the monitoring of the construction site. They chose a sub-committee comprising of teachers one of whom participated as a teacher representative of PTA. In school E the PTA conduct the monitoring exercise and the materials for construction were procured by PTA members themselves.

Based on the findings above, SMC/PTAs were very much involved in the construction of new infrastructure they have shown their commitment through participation in monitoring the progress of the projects. Therefore, SMC/PTAs can be rated level 3 in construction of new infrastructure.

In general, SMC/PTAs can be rated level 4 on Sheafers ladder of community participation because their involvement is leaning towards construction of infrastructure other than maintenance and rehabilitation. Their involvement is partial.

4.4 Monitoring of Quality of learning

There are several ways in which the school management committee can monitor the quality of learning in schools. This study looked at how the committees were involved in the following: management of pupil and teacher discipline; provision of teaching and learning materials and teacher motivation. And the following subsections show the findings.

4.4.1 SMC/PTA Involvement in management of pupil discipline

According to secondary school management hand book (MoEST, 2013), discipline is a necessity for proper functioning of schools and is essential for effective learning and quality of school life. PTAs are among the main actors in managing school discipline through holding meetings with parents to discuss disciplinary matters, addressing learners and teachers in terms of discipline and checking if policies are followed.

When asked if SMC/PTA were involved in management of pupil discipline, the study found that of the 49 respondents, 75% stated that SMC/PTA members were involved in management of discipline whereas 25% reported that they were not. Through interviews with head teachers it was observed that SMC/PTAs were not members of discipline committees but they were involved in pupil discipline. Table 12 outlines how SMC/PTAs in 7 of the 8 schools managed pupil discipline.

Table12: Head teachers’ responses on SMC/PTAs management of pupil discipline in different schools

School	Role of SMC/PTA
A	They are involved when there is a burning issue and they do this only when they are asked.
B	They are involved in hearing cases that are extremes. They also talk to students on disciplinary issue in classes
C	They talk to parents during PTA meeting
D	They monitor behavior of self-boarders, and act as counselors
E	They monitor self-boarders and talk to landlords on students conduct. They work hand in hand with mother groups to check girls conduct and have a rule which specifies how students dress.
F	They are not generally involved only when they have a crucial case
G	PTA are not usually involved in discipline cases
H	They remind students on rules and regulations

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

On the same issue prefects from 5 of the 8 schools had this to say.

Table 13: Prefects Opinion on role of SMC/PTAs on pupil discipline

School	Prefects Opinion
C	PTA advises us on how we should behave. We are asked to report lazy teachers
E	We are given lectures on discipline issues by PTA
D	Our school PTA is responsible for compulsory preps. They monitor self-boarders and report on us to administration if misbehaving
F	We have never been advised by PTA and we do not know what their role is on discipline
H	PTA has never given us advice on disciplinary issues

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

Prefects from school A, B, and G were not interviewed because in school B prefects did not participate because they were busy writing examination when the researcher visited the school. In the other schools students were not told of the researchers visit.

Looking at responses from both head teachers and prefects in schools C, D, E, F it was found that the responses were similar. In school F both prefects and head teachers indicated that PTA members were not involved in school discipline whereas in schools number C, D and E they indicated that PTA members were involved. SMC/PTA members were playing an advisory role to students.

On the other hand, in school H, prefects indicated that SMCs did not discipline them whereas the head teacher and PTA indicated otherwise. The information given by the respondents is contradictory hence not conclusive. However, the prefects are subjects on the ground to whom discipline forms the main part of their responsibility and for this reason one is bound to trust the students observation more.

In conclusion, while in 6 of the 8 schools SMC/PTA are involved in management of discipline issues, the levels of involvement varies. Despite the variations, the general picture of their involvement is at level 4 of Shaefers ladder of participation. One of the observations that supports this level of involvement is the observation that in all the schools studied, PTA/SMCs are not included in the disciplinary committees making their maximum participation farfetched.

4.4.2 Role of SMC/PTA on teacher motivations

Head teachers, teachers and SMC/PTA members were asked to explain what role SMC/PTA played in teacher motivation. Figure one from SPSS below show general opinion of the respondents.

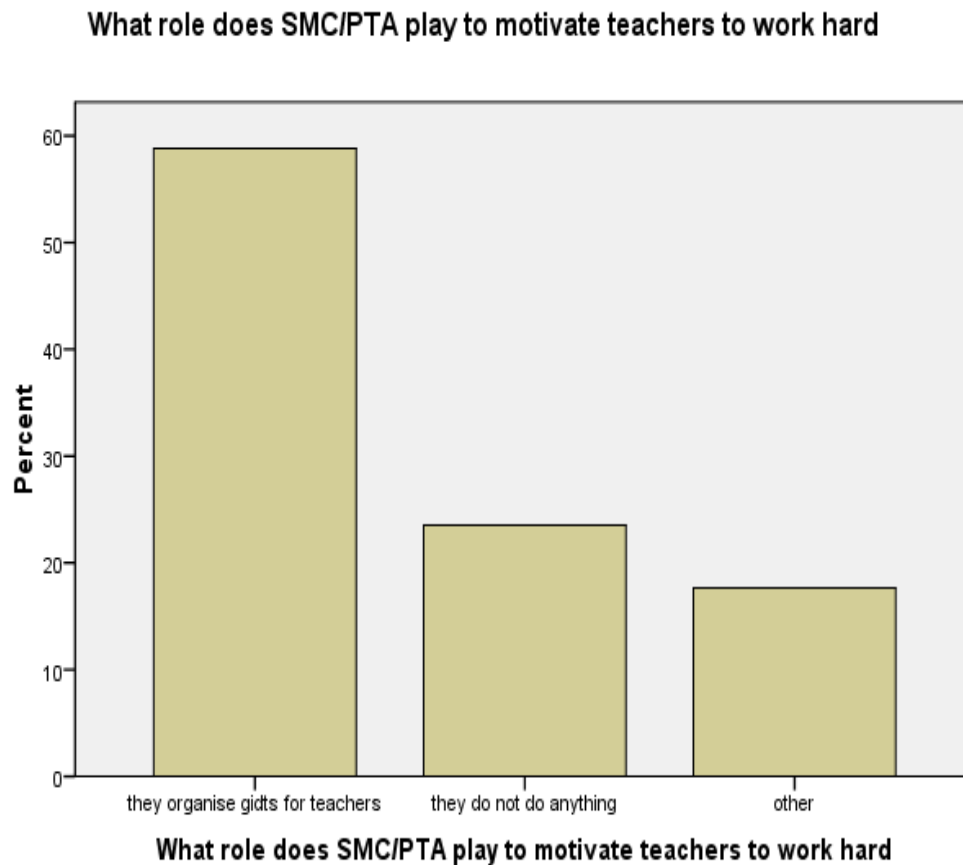


Figure 1: Role of SMC/PTA on teacher motivations

Source: Researcher analysed data (2015)

Figure 1 shows that 59% of participants reported that SMC/PTA organised gifts for teacher motivation. This is in agreement with what came out during interviews with head teachers and SMC/PTA members. In school A, no rewards were given to teachers. The SMC/PTA members said that they were new and did not know what to do. In school B, the PTA provided lunch and tea to teachers to keep them in teaching

area all the time. In school C, rewards were presented to teachers who had done well. In school D, they paid rentals for newly recruited teachers to keep them in their school. In school F they gave award to both deserving teachers and students. In school G awards were given to students only. In school H, the SMC did not provide any incentives to teachers.

The findings suggest that, some schools motivated teachers and others did not. For those that did, the mode of motivation varied from one school to another. It can however be concluded that SMC/PTA do motivate teachers to some extent and the author's rating will be at level 4 in the Shaefers ladder of participation which is involvement through consultation (or feedback) on particular issues.

4.4.3 Knowledge on how much teaching and learning materials the school had

The study also wanted to know if the SMC/PTAs were knowledgeable on how much the teaching and learning materials the school had. The findings revealed that 69% of the 49 respondents said that the SMCs were knowledgeable on how much teaching materials the school had. However evidence from the interviews and Focus group discussions in school A revealed that PTA was told that the procurement of teaching and learning materials was not their concern. Likewise in school C the PTA was not involved in the management of teaching and learning materials.

Though 69% of the respondents reported that they were knowledgeable of the quantity of teaching and learning materials the school had, their participation in the management of these materials was low. They can be rated at level 6 on the Shaefers ladder of participation because they were just being informed of how much teaching

and learning materials the school had and they did not take part in the management of teaching and learning materials.

From the 8 schools that were studied, only one school had the pupil classroom ratio of less than 60:1. The remaining schools had higher pupil classroom ratio. Table 14 summaries the responses from schools on whether the schools had plans to increase the number of classrooms

Table 14: Plan of the school on classroom construction

School	No plans	PTA to construct more	Wait for Government	Lobby for assistance	Total
A	2	3	1	0	6
B	0	4	0	1	5
C	0	1	3	4	8
D	0	3	0	6	9
E	0	0	0	7	7
F	0	0	4	0	4
G	1	1	1	0	3
H	2	2	0	2	6
Total	5	14	9	20	48

Source: Data from SPSS tables created by researcher (2015)

Table 14 shows that different schools had different plans regarding how they could have additional classrooms. School E is a community day secondary school in the rural area and it planned to lobby for more classrooms where as school F is a conventional secondary school which was waiting for the government to come and construct more classrooms. The need for more classrooms is also dependent on the type of school. The conventional ones C, F and G did not need the PTA to construct more classrooms. It is the CDSSs that need more classrooms and have placed

lobbying with support from SMC/PTA as a means for sourcing out additional classroom.

4.4.4 Role of SMC/PTA in reducing dropout

When asked what SMC/PTA did to reduce dropout, different respondents had different responses as summarized in the table below:

Table 15: What role does the PTA/SMC play to assist reduce dropout rate

What role does the PTA/SMC play to assist reduce dropout rate					Total
School Name	Provide grants to needy students	investigate and advise the school on why students are dropping out	they do not do anything	other	
A	1	1	4	0	6
B	1	4	1	0	6
C	2	3	2	0	7
D	7	2	0	0	9
E	0	4	0	3	7
F	0	2	2	0	4
G	1	2	1	0	4
H	0	0	6	1	7
Total	12	18	16	4	50

Source: Data from SPSS created by researcher

Schools A and H are community day secondary schools in urban and based on table 15 the majority of the respondents in these schools indicated that SMC/PTAs do not do anything to assist in reducing dropout rate. However, in schools B to G SMC/PTAs took some initiative to assist in reducing dropout rate. Based on the responses given by the majority, school number 4 would be rated at level 5 which is involvement through contribution of resources though. Schools B, C and E would be rated level 4 by the author. In general according to the researcher, involvement in reducing dropout rate will be at level 4.

4.5 Availability of school improvement plan

A school improvement plan is a set of development activities the school lays out for implementation during a specific period of time. These activities are designed to improve the quality of education translated through academic achievement (MoEST, 2014). The study wanted to find out if the school had SIPs or School Action Plan.

The study found that, of the 52 respondents, 90% reported that the schools had a school improvement plan. This is in agreement with head teachers responses during the interviews. School Improvement Plan is expected to be prepared by school management team, learners, SMCs, PTAs and mother groups. When asked how these plans were prepared, most of the respondent reported that they were prepared by the school management team. SMC/PTAs were not involved with the exception of two schools. In one school SMC/PTA members pointed out that they were involved and it was the school management team, learners and PTA discussing issues for school improvement until the change of school administrators. Whereas in the other school SMC/PTA members indicated that they were involved by discussing with learners and the community on school management. This school learnt how to prepare SIPs from the nearby primary schools.

There were different responses regarding the contents of the SIP. Some SMC/PTA members were confusing it with the budget. Some pointed out that they just knew that it existed but had not seen it. Others simply expressed ignorance about SIP. Only one school was able to outline some of the contents of SIP. Most of the respondents failed to explain how SIP was developed but could only tell who were responsible for preparation of SIP. One respondent said that the SIP in their school was prepared

without following specific guidelines. Therefore the involvement of SMC/PTA in SIP management would be rated level 7 because from the 8 schools only 2 schools were involved in SIP development. Most of the schools are not involved in SIP development.

4.6 Chapter Summary

In assessing the effectiveness of SMC/PTAs in school management, Table 16 below gives the summary of the findings of participation levels as assessed by the researcher using the ladder of participation.

Table 16: Summary of the findings

Research question	Rating
Management of school revenue	4
Infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation of the school	6
Monitoring the quality of learning in schools	6
Development, implementation, and monitoring of the school improvement plans	7
Overall (Effectiveness of SMC/PTAs in school management)	6
Average rating	5.8

Source: Researcher's analysed data (2015)

The chapter presented and discussed findings of the study based on the research questions of the study. The study established that not all SMC/PTA members were trained. However those trained were trained by trainers who had different objectives. The tenure of office by these members was not adhered to, most of them were office

bearers for more than two terms. The findings from the study have shown that SMC/PTA members are partially involved in revenue management. However they are not involved in budget preparation. SMC/PTA members are not active members of IPC and their involvement in boarding is when they need more food for the students. Through the study it has also been established that guidelines on infrastructure management are not used and in most of the schools they could not be found. The study also noted that SMC/PTA members are not involved in development of SIP or SAP.

The final chapter is conclusion, and implications of the findings to the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Chapter Overview

The key research question for the study was: How effective are secondary schools SMC/PTAs in local governance and management of secondary schools? This overall question was explored through four specific research questions namely: (1) How are secondary schools PTA/SMCs involved in management of school revenue? (2) What role do secondary schools PTA/SMCs play in infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation of the school? (3) How do secondary schools PTAs/SMCs monitor the quality of learning in schools? (4) How are secondary school PTAs/SMCs involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the school improvement plans? The overall approach used to generate data in order to answer these questions was mixed methods design where both qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

There were a number of issues that the study found out on how SMCs/PTAs in the sampled secondary schools functioned. The study used Shaeffer's ladder of participation to rate the level of participation as explained in the chapters. The following sections give a summary of these results.

5.1 Management of school revenue

Through meetings, SMC/PTA members were made aware of how much fees was collected per students. However, most of them did not know the details of the school revenue especially how much these funds were collected.

When it came to the use of funds, there was no transparency in financial transaction. SMC/PTA members were kept in the dark on what happened with the other revenue the school collected. The only revenue which was disclosed to the SMC/PTA was the SDF and PTA funds. This could be as a result of lack of knowledge in management of fees retained in schools. This agrees with findings from the studies conducted in Zimbabwe by Nyandoro et al. (2013) on financial management, which revealed that lack of knowledge of the roles as outlined in the statutory guideline, was affecting school development committees in their effectiveness in financial management. On the part of the SMC/PTAs, there was very little monitoring of expenditure of revenue by SMC/PTA members. This happened due to members' lack of capacity as well as deliberate hiding of information by school management team.

In addition, SMC/PTAs were not involved in budget preparations though they were allowed to make expenditure plans for SDF and PTA funds. There was also very little involvement of SMC/PTA in IPC. Furthermore, implementation of fees retention guidelines was not being monitored by MoEST officials. However, there was some involvement of SMC/PTA in the management of the boarding facilities.

In general therefore, the management of school revenue is partial and it is rated at level 4 according to Shaefer's ladder of participation. This means that there is still

need for SMC/PTAs to improve in management of school level revenue through; involvement in budget preparation, sourcing out information on school revenue by physically checking the accounts details other than depending on information provided by the head teacher and active involvement in internal procurement committees. Boarding Schools should have Boarding committees in which SMC/PTAs should be members who are actively involved in decision making (MoEST 2013).

5.2 Infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation of the school

SMC/PTAs had no guidelines on infrastructure management despite the dissemination of the same in 2009. SMC/PTAs did not have a planned infrastructure monitoring exercise as per guidelines requirement. SMC/PTA members were however involved in construction projects taking place in schools. These results agree with research conducted in Zimbabwe by Mupindu 2012 which revealed that school development committees have assisted in construction of infrastructure. Therefore, on the management of infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation of schools, SMC/PTAs were passive and are rated on level 6 according to Sheaffer's ladder of participation. This means that SMC/PTAs are not involved in planning for infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation. They are just told what to do when the need arises.

5.3 Monitoring the quality of learning in schools

PTA/SMCs were not members of the discipline committee however; they assisted in some cases when summoned. This means they are passive members of discipline committee. SMC/PTAs were also involved in teacher motivation through provision of rewards to teachers based on the performance of students. In one case they provided

lunch to teachers to keep them in school, they also provided rentals for newly recruited teachers. In addition, SMC/PTAs knew how much teaching and learning materials the schools had, however they were not involved in procurement of these learning materials. In cases where there was need for more classrooms, PTA/SMC had plans to construct more and lobby for more classrooms where necessary. However, PTA/SMCs did not do much on reducing drop out in secondary school. Governing bodies are non-professional and lay and that they lack relevant skills, time, understanding and knowledge about education in general and therefore ill equipped for certain roles (Shearn et al. 1995).

In general, the management of quality of learning by SMC/PTA was indirect and is rated at level 6 according to the Shaefer's ladder of participation. This means that SMC/PTAs were passively involved in management of quality of learning.

5.4 Development, implementation, and monitoring of the school improvement plans

There were no SIPs or SAP in most of the schools. SMC/PTAs were not involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the school improvement plans as evidence collected showed no existence of such plans in these secondary schools. Furthermore, SMC/PTAs were not involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring school Action Plans. This is rated at level 7 on Shaefer's ladder of participation because SMC/PTAs were not involved at all.

The study has established that despite efforts by government to introduce guidelines on the functions of SMC/PTAs, and despite other efforts made to operationalise other

structures strengthening Local governance through public service reforms, School management committees are not effective in the functioning of secondary schools.

This argument is based on the facts that;

- SMC/PTA members were not properly trained and hence not empowered to participate effectively.
- SMC/PTAs were aware of how much fees students paid to the school and they also knew that school received money from government, however, SMC/PTA members were not aware of how this money was spent except for SDF and PTA funds. On top of that they were not part of budget team and were not involved in procurement.
- In case of infrastructure management, they were mostly involved in construction other than maintenance. They were not using the guidelines for infrastructure management because the guidelines are not found in the schools.
 - The other argument is that the SMC/PTA members were not involved in planning. Secondary schools have school action plans to guide school on major activities of the school, but there was no contribution from SMC/PTA members.

5.5 Implications

There are a number of areas that need to be addressed for SMC/PTAs to effectively manage the schools.

- organise trainings for SMC/PTAs annually to build capacity in them. Citing an example of school number E which was trained by PEAs, SMCs are involved in a number of management issues. However the trainings they went through were organised by schools themselves and the trainers were from primary sub sector

where schools do not collect fees as such as such trainers may not have addressed the issue of school fees management. These trainings should therefore be facilitated by Educational Planners and School Inspectors to ensure that the committees are empowered to hold management accountable.

- MoEST should revert to the previous policy which included SMC/PTAs as signatories to the bank accounts in order to increase transparency and accountability. This again will bring ownership of the school to the community

5.6 Suggestions for further research

- Since this study focused in one division and in 8 schools only, a similar study should be carried out in other division to have a wider scope of how SMC/PTAs are managing schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Introduction letter from Chancellor College

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Principal: Richard Tambulasi,
B.A. (PUB Admin), BPA (Hon), MBA, PhD.

P. O. Box 280, Zomba, MALAWI
Tel: (265) 01 524 222
Telex: 44742 CHANCOL MI
Fax: (265) 01 524 046

Our Ref.: EDF/6/19
Your Ref.:

19th May, 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP)

Mrs Magret Alfazema (MED/PPL/02/12) is a student of Education in the Department of Education Foundations at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

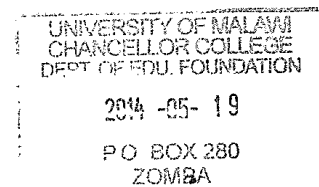
The department has approved Mrs Alfazema to conduct research for her thesis on the "*Effectiveness of Parent, Teacher Associations/ School Management Committees in School Management in Mchinji and Lilongwe.*".

This letter serves to be a request to you and your institution or organization to support and provide any assistance necessary to our student for her successful implementation of the study.

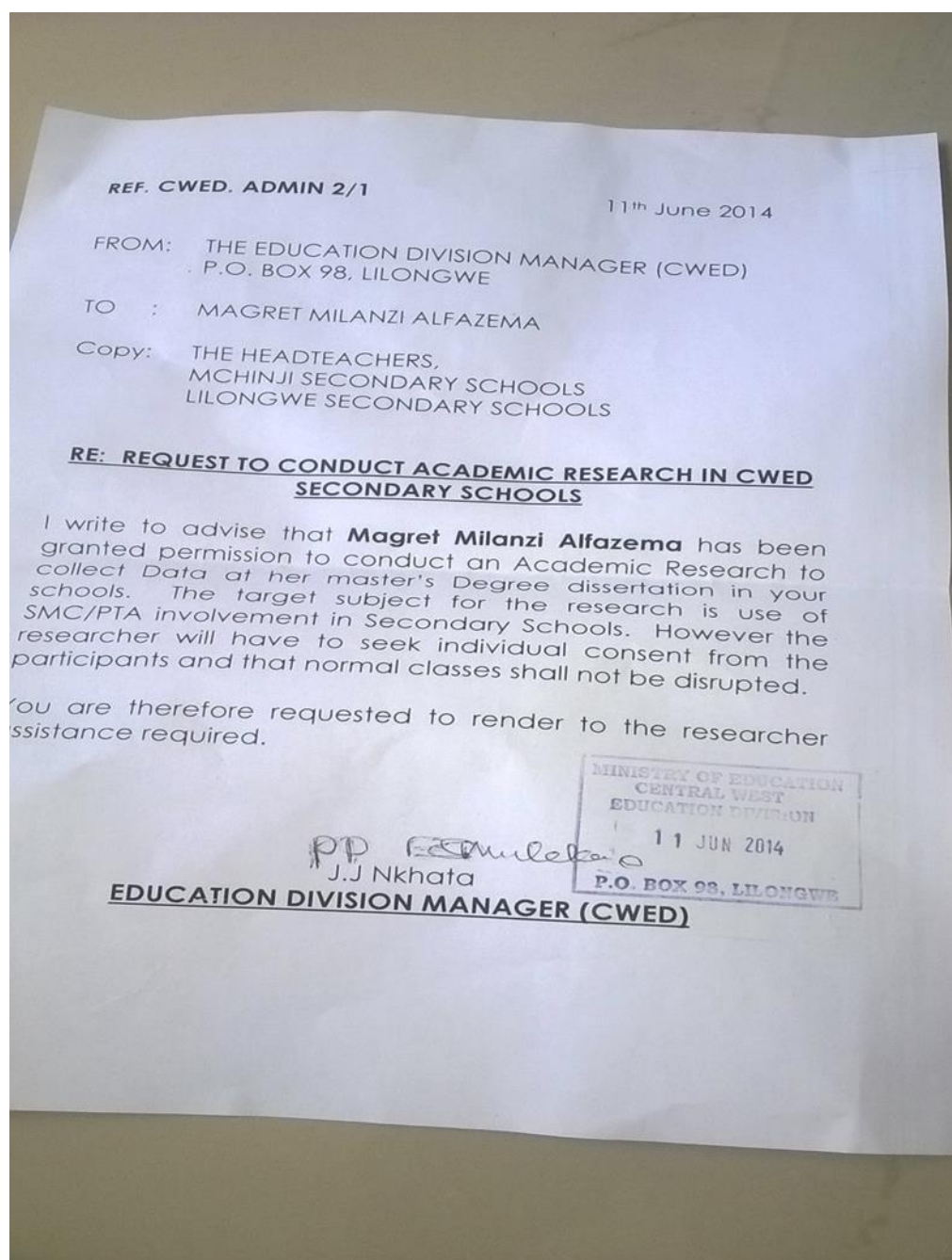
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you

Symon Ernest Chiziwa, PhD
HEAD EDUCATION FOUNDATIONS DEPARTMENT



Appendix B: Introduction letter from Education Divisional Manager



Appendix C: Questionnaire for teachers, head teachers and PTA/SMC members

INSTRUCTIONS

I am currently conducting a study in two Education districts, Lilongwe Urban and Mchinji district. The study will focus on the effectiveness of school management committees/ Parent teacher associations in executing their roles. Your school has been selected because it has either a School Management committee (SMC) or a Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

Your contribution to this study will be valued and I will be very grateful if you could spare a few minutes to complete this questionnaire.

Your responses will be treated with confidentiality and you are encouraged to express your opinions freely.

Please make sure that you do not write your name on this questionnaire and attempt to answer all the questions.

Your completion of this questionnaire will be greatly appreciated.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS, HEADTEACHERS AND PTA/SMC MEMBERS

Division.....

Education District.....

School Name

Location **Urban**

Rural

Personal information

1. Sex (please tick in the appropriate box)

Male

Female

2. What is your age (please tick in the appropriate box)

a. Less than 25 years

(b)26-30 years

(c)31-35years

(d)36-40 years

(e)41-45 years

(f)46-50 years

(g)51 or more years

3. For how long have you been teaching or being a member of PTA/SMC at this school? (please tick in the appropriate box)

(a) Less than a year

(b) 1-5 years

(c) 6-10 years

(d) 11 years or more

PTA/SMC INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL REVENUE

4. Does your school have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or School Management Committee (SMC)? (please tick in the appropriate box)

(a) Has PTA only

(b) Has SMC only

(c)Has both PTA and SMC

5. If the school has both PTA and SMC which of the two is more active?

a) SMC

b) PTA

c) Both

6. Who collects school fees at this school?

a) An accountant employed by the government

b) A bursar

c) The headteacher

d) The deputy headteacher

e) A teacher assigned by the headteacher

f) An officer employed by the school

7. Do you know how much fees is collected from students at this school

a) Yes

b) No

8. If yes how did you know about this?

a) Through PTA meetings

b) Through the headteacher during staff meetings

c) Through displays in the school notice boards

d) Other specify-----

9. Are you aware on how these funds are used?

a) Yes

b) No

10. If yes how are these funds used -----

11. Does your school have a bank account?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Do not know

12. If the answer is yes, does your school deposit school revenue into the school bank account before any expenditure?

- a) Yes
- b) No

13. Who are the signatories to the school bank account?

- a) The headteacher and some SMC/PTA members
- b) Headteacher and deputy headteacher
- c) Headteacher and the school accounts personnel

d) Other specify-----

14. Are SMC/PTA members involved in the annual budget preparation of your school?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If yes how do they get involved?-----

15. Does your school have internal procurement committee (IPC)?

- a) Yes
- b) No

16) If yes do you have any member of SCM/PTA in the IPC?

- a) Yes
- b) No

17). Does your school have a boarding committee?

- a) Yes
- b) No

18) If yes do you have any member of SCM/PTA in the boarding committee?

- a) Yes
- b) No

ROLE OF PTA /SCMS IN INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION

19) Should PTA/SMCs in secondary school be involved in the running of the school maintenance and development?

- a) Yes
- b) no

20 If yes are PTAs/SMCs involved in development of maintenance budget within available resources

- a) Yes
- b) No

21 During the time you have been at this school, has there been construction work?

- a) Yes
- b) No

22 If yes were the SMC/PTA informed of such work?

- a) Yes
- b) No

23 If yes how many committee members were selected to attend site meetings?

24 How often did the SMC/PTA visit the construction site?

- a) Very often
- b) Not often
- c) Rarely visited the site
- d) Do not know

25 Do SMC/PTA monitor school buildings?

- a) Yes
- b) No

26 Do SMC/PTA monitor school grounds?

- a) Yes
- b) No

27 Do SMC/PTA monitor plumbing system?

- a) Yes
- b) No

28 If yes when did SMC/PTA last do the inspection of the school infrastructure and what were the recommendation?

29) If not why did SMC/PTA not monitor the school infrastructure?

MONITORING OF QUALITY OF LEARNING BY SCHOOL

30) Is SMC/PTA involved in management of pupil discipline cases?

- a) Yes
- b) No

31 How does the school involve SMC/PTA?

- a) At least a member is in the discipline committee
 - b) They are not members but are invited to attend absenteeism hearing
 - c) They are not involved at all
 - d) Other specify
-
.....

32) If a teacher is called for a discipline hearing, are PTA/SMC members invited?

- a) Yes
- b) No

33) If yes what roles do they play in the discipline case?

- a) They recommend transfer of the teacher if the case is serious
- b) They just advise the teacher on his conduct
- c) They do not do anything else but listen to what other members say

d) Other specify.

.....
.....

34 If not, why are they not involved?

35 What role does SMC/PTA play to motivate teachers to work hard?

a) They organise gifts for teachers

b) They do not do anything.

c) Other specify

36 Does your SMC/PTA have knowledge on how much teaching and learning material the school has?

a) Yes

b) No

37 How do SMC/PTAs help in sourcing out teaching and learning materials?

a) part of PTA fund is used for purchase of teaching and learning materials

b) They do not help at all.

c) Other. specify

38 Does SMC/PTA monitor the pass rates of both J.C.E and M.S.C.E results?

a) Yes

b) No

39 If yes what advice do they give the school?

40 If not why don't they monitor. -----

41 How many classrooms does your school have?

43 What is the pupil-classroom ratio?

44 In secondary schools the recommended pupil-classroom ratio is 1:50. If your school has a higher pupil class room ratio of more than 1:80, what are the plans of the school to reduce this class size?

- a) The school has no plans
- b) Inform the PTA/SMC to construct more classroom blocks
- c) Wait for the government to come and assist
- d) Lobby from the assembly with the assistance of PTA/SMC for additional classroom blocks.

45 What role does the PTA/SMC play to assist reduce the dropout rate?

- a) Provide grants to the needy students
- b) They investigate and advise the school on why students are dropping out
- c) They do not do anything
- d) Other specify

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN/ SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

46 Does your school have a school improvement plan?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Do not know

44. If your answer is yes, who develops this plan?

- a) The head teachers and head of departments

- b) Selected members of staff
- c) SMC/PTA
- d) SMC/PTA together with the school management team
- e) Other(specify) -----

47. If the school has a plan, are you aware of what is in the plan?

- a) Yes
- b) No

48 . Does SMC/PTA use this plan when executing their duties?

- a) Yes
- b) No -----

Other (specify)-----

Appendix D: Question guide for head teachers

PART 1 SMC/PTA INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL REVENUE

1. For how long have you been a heading this school?
2. Does this school have a PTA or SMC or both?
3. Have the committee/s been trained in school management?
4. Who trained them?
5. In 2011 the ministry of Education released guidelines on the management of fees retained in schools. What do the guidelines say? Does the school have these guidelines? Have you read the guidelines? Have members of the SMC/PTA read these guidelines?
6. How do SMC/PTA use these guidelines.
7. Do SMC/PTA members know how much the revenue the school collects?
8. If yes how do SMC/PTA monitor the expenditure of collected revenue? If not why?
9. How are SMCs/PTAs involved in budget exercise?
10. Who are the signatories of your school bank account?
11. What is the role of SMC/PTA treasurer in your school?
12. Do you have Internal Procurement committee (IPC) in this school?
13. What is the composition of this committee?
14. what is the role of SMC/PTA in this committee
15. Does this school provide boarding facilities?
16. If yes what is the composition of the boarding committee?
17. What is the role of SMC/PTA in this committee?

PART 2 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION

18. When was this school established?
19. Who initiated the construction of the school?
20. How does the SCM/PTA monitor the school infrastructure?
21. When did the SMC/PTA last conduct monitoring exercise on the infrastructure?

22. Are there any guiding documents for the monitoring exercise?
23. What were the recommendations of this monitoring exercise?
24. Do you have any construction projects at this school?
25. How are the SMC/PTA members involved in this project?

PART 3 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN MONITORING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

26. Does your school have discipline committees for students and teachers?
27. What is the composition of these committees?
28. How do you maintain both teacher and students discipline at this school?
29. What is the role of SMC/PTA in teacher and students discipline management in this school?
30. Does this school have adequate classrooms?
31. If not why and what are the plans of the school on shortage of classroom??
What is the role of SMC/PTA in this?
32. Does the school have adequate teachers?
33. If not what do you think is the problem and how would you rectify this problem? What is the role of SMC in this?
34. How many teachers' houses does the school have? What is the role of SMC/PTA in this?
35. What is the trend in pass rate for both JCE and MSCE examinations for the past five years? How do SMC/PTAs follow the examination trends.
36. Are there any incentives given to teacher and students who perform better in examinations? Who provide these incentives? What is the role of SMC/PTA in this?
37. How do SMC/PTA monitor the teaching and learning at this school?

**PART 4 INVOLVEMENT OF SMC/PTA IN
DEVELOPMENT,IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

38. Does your school have a school Improvement Plan?
39. Who are involved in the preparation of this plan?
40. How are SMC/PTAs involved in the development of this plan?
41. How is this SIP developed?
42. How do SCM/PTAs monitor the implementation of the school improvement plan?

Appendix E: Focus group discussion question guide for prefects

- 1 Does your school have a PTA/SMC?

PART 1 SMC/PTA INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL REVENUE

- 2 If yes, What is the composition of this committee
- 3 What roles do SMC/PTA members have at this school?
- 4 How are SMCs involved in the internal procurement committee (IPC)?
- 5 What is the function of this committee?
- 6 What is the composition of this committee?
- 7 If this school is a boarding school does it have a boarding committee?
- 8 How are PTA/SMC members involved in this committee?

PART 2 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION

- 9 How do SMC/PTA monitor infrastructure for maintenance in your school?

PART 3 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN MONITORING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

- 10 To what extent do SMC/PTA members monitor the quality of learning at this school?

PART 4 INVOLVEMENT OF SMC/PTA IN DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 11 Does your school have a School improvement plan?
- 12 To what extent were SMC/PTA members involved in the formulation of this plan?
- 13 How do the SMC monitor the implementation of this plan

Appendix F: Focus group discussion guide for SMCs/PTAs

General information

1. What roles do you perform at this school?
2. What is the composition of your committee?
3. When did you start working as SMC/PTA members and for how long?
4. What is the tenure of office as SMC/PTA members

PART 1 SMC/PTA INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL

REVENUE

5. Every school collects different types of fees. Each type of fees has its function. What fees does your school collect and how is it used?
6. How much does the school collect as school fees from students per term?
7. What challenges does the school have when collecting fees?
8. What role do you take as SMC/PTA in management of this fees collected?
9. How do you access the account details of your school?
10. Who are the signatories of the school bank account?
11. To what extent are you involved in the budgeting process for activities taking place in your school?
12. In 2009 the Ministry of Education released guidelines on management of fees retained in school. The guidelines were revised in 2011. What do the guidelines say?
13. What do you know about the Internal Procurement committee (IPC) at this school?
14. Who are the members of this committee? This can be asked as a follow up question depending on how they will respond.

PART 2 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION

15. When was this school constructed?
16. Who constructed your school?
17. In 2009 Ministry of Education released guidelines on infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation in public secondary schools. What do the guidelines say?

18. How do you monitor the school infrastructure?
19. How is infrastructure maintained and rehabilitated?
20. What role do you play in the infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation?
21. How satisfied are you on the role you take in the infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation?
22. What suggestions can you make on how SMC/PTA's involvement in infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation can be improved?
23. What development activities has the committee carried out at this school for the past 5 years?

PART 3 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN MONITORING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

24. Does the school have discipline committees for students and teachers?
25. Who are the members of these committees?
26. What role do you play in disciplinary matters of this school?
27. How do you relate with the school to ensure that there are adequate teachers at this school?
28. Do you monitor how the examination results have been changing in your school for the past 5 years? If not why? If yes how?
29. AS PTA/SCM how are you involved in management of teaching and learning materials?
30. How do you monitor teachers and learners to make sure that they spend enough time on learning activities?

PART 4 INVOLVEMENT OF SMC/PTA IN DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

31. Does your school have a school improvement plan? If not why? If yes how was it developed?
32. How is this plan implemented?
33. What is the mechanism for monitoring the implementation of this plan?

Appendix G: Question guide for SMC/PTA chairpersons

1. For how long have you been in the school management committee
2. What are your roles as a chairperson of this committee
3. How do you relate with other member of this committee
4. How do you relate with the head teacher and other member of staff of this school.
5. Who trained you as a chairperson of this committee?

PART 1 SMC/PTA INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL REVENUE

6. How do you access the school revenue details?
7. To what extent are you involved in the preparation of school budgets?
8. How are you involved in the internal procurement committee of this school?
9. If this school is a boarding school to what extent are you involved in the boarding committee?

PART 2 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION

10. To what extent is SMC/PTA involved in the maintenance and rehabilitation of this school?
11. How is the school maintenance and rehabilitation done at this school?
12. Is the school carrying out any construction project? If yes what is the role of SMC/PTA in this project?
13. How are guidelines in infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation used in this school?

PART 3 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN MONITORING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

14. How are you involved in pupil and teacher discipline management?
15. How do you assess the quality of learning as a member of SMC at this school?
16. How is SMC/PTA involved in the procurement of teaching and learning materials?

**PART 4 INVOLVEMENT OF SMC/PTA IN
DEVELOPMENT,IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

17. To what extent is SMC/PTA involved in the development of School Improvement Plan (SIP)
18. How is this SIP implemented
19. How do SMC/PTA monitor the implementation of this SIP.
20. What are the contents of your SIP.

Appendix H: Question guide for education division officials

1. As a SEMA you do inspect schools and one of the issues that you monitor is the availability of SMC/PTA in schools. How functional are PTA/SMCs in CWED schools?
2. Who trains PTA/SMCs on their roles?
3. Do you have documents that could assist PTAs/SMCs in executing their duties?
4. How do you give guidance to these SMC/PTAs?

PART 1 SMC/PTA INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL REVENUE

5. How are SMC/PTAs involved in the management of school revenue.
6. How effective are the guidelines on management of school revenue in your division?

PART 2 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION

7. How do SMC/PTA monitor the condition of school infrastructure in your division?

PART 3 ROLE OF SMC/PTA IN MONITORING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

8. What is the role of SMC/PTA on student and teacher discipline?
9. To what extent should SMC/PTA be involved in the management of teacher and students discipline?

PART 4 INVOLVEMENT OF SMC/PTA IN DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

10. Schools are expected to have a School improvement Plan. Do schools in your division have action plan? Who prepares it?
11. How do you encourage SMC/PTAs in the preparation of SIPs?

Appendix I: Question guide for Ministry of Education officials

1. Does the Ministry of education have a policy document that guides secondary school SMCs/PTAs on their duties?
2. If yes do schools have this document?
3. In 2011 and 2009 guidelines on collection and retention of finances in public secondary schools and infrastructure management were released respectively. How does the Ministry of education ensure that these guidelines are followed?
4. According to the 2011 guidelines on fees retention SMCs/PTAs are expected to be involved in the management of school revenue. How are these committees involved in the management of school revenue? How do you monitor their performance?
5. One of the duties of SMC/PTA is to monitor the quality of learning in school. How do SMC/PTAs carry out this function?
6. Primary schools have school improvement plans (SIPs) that guide the SMCs on activities that the school together with the community plan to carry out in order to improve the school. What happens in secondary schools? What plans do secondary schools have in order to improve their schools?