



**FACTORS INFLUENCING LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MALAWI.**

By

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the degree of Master of Education in Teacher Education.

At

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## DECLARATION

This research Project is my original work and has not been presented for award  
of a degree in any other university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' inside a circle, followed by a horizontal line and a downward-pointing arrow.

Moses Nyasulu

This research Project is submitted for examination with my approval as  
university supervisor

.....

C. Mpewe

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## **DEDICATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed at establishing factors influencing the low academic performance of learners in the Seventh Day Adventist's (SDA) secondary schools in Malawi. The following research questions guided the study: What are the significant factors influencing learners' low academic performance in the SDA secondary schools? How do these factors influence learners' low academic performance? What are the implications of these factors on learners' academic performance? What academic interventions can enhance learners' high academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi?

The research used a descriptive research design under mixed research approach to conduct this study. The study's sample had 54 participants of 24 females and 30 males. These participants comprised school principals, station pastors, learners and teachers in selected secondary schools, and members of the school board. The study collected data through interview guides, naturalistic observation schedules, document analysis and questionnaires. The qualitative and the quantitative data collected was analysed using content analysis and SPSS, respectively.

Further to that, in quantitative data, there was statistical modelling analysis (using linear regression analysis) to show the relationship between dependent and independent variables in order to establish the significant factors. The study's findings have revealed several factors that influence learners' low academic performance. Even though there are many factors, the study discovered that late commencement of lessons, indiscipline, enrolment of learners, learners' pocket money, inadequacy of textbooks and laboratory materials are the significant factors that influence the low performance of the learners in the aforementioned secondary schools in Malawi.

The study, therefore, recorded recommendations as follows: there must be adequate time to learners on their studies than on church activities, need for arrangement for consultative

meetings on how to enhance education, and aptitude test administered must be well standardized.

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS**

MANEB	:	Malawi National Examinations Board
MSCE	:	Malawi School Certificate of Education
PTA	:	Parent Teachers` Association
CA	:	Continuous Assessment
SDA	:	Seventh-day Adventist
SES	:	Socio-economic Status
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Background Information**

Before 1800, the main factor that promoted interaction between the Africans and Europeans was the issue of slave trade. However, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a new twist as the missionary work began in Africa before European colonialists had colonized the continent. In 1800, early European Missionaries took a great role in the exploration of Africa alongside European secular explorers. Missionary societies were formed and took upon themselves the responsibility of combatting slave trade (Anderson, 1970). They were concerned with the issue of spreading the gospel to the so-called “heathen” Africans.

The coming of the Christian missionaries in Malawi was a planned activity with full determination to Christianise Malawians. The Seventh Day Adventist missionaries as one of the foreign Christian missionaries, apart from emphasizing on the spread of the gospel, they also addressed other human needs of the people they preached. According to Bilima (1987), almost all mission societies started their work with a triangular approach in response to the Great Commission of Jesus; to teach, preach and heal diseases. It is observed that missionaries used schools that aimed at giving practical training in agriculture, crafts, and printing; a church for preaching the Word of God where teachers served as the preachers; and finally medical clinics that provided healing to humanity.

In education, the missionary groups introduced Africans to written literature through Christian propaganda; that is to say, they came up with first books in African language in order to make Africans understand the message that would attract them to the new religion of Christianity. Bilima (1987) concurs by arguing that the missionaries aimed at teaching nationals the Word of God as whenever a school opened, it aimed to give a practical knowledge rather than

academic excellence since its primary goal was evangelism. In a broader view, missionaries of all denominations including the Seventh-Day Adventist, disseminated education in their attempt to win converts who could go to different areas to win other souls. This indicates that from the beginning of educational history, the Seventh Day Adventist denomination has operated schools to transmit its own beliefs to its children or students.

Maxwell & Clarke (1990) state that “SDA Christian education is one of the most effective and efficient ways in which the church carries out its mission”. The missionaries were working on the system of “Transforming Africa by the Africans” which was the formula advocated by Cardinal Lavigerie in his instructions to the White Fathers (Grochowski, 2008). The plan behind was to make some Africans attain education which would make them become Christians and apostles and eventually they would work in the field to convince fellow Africans to join the European churches. It is noted that the missionaries established many schools in the areas they planted their mission stations. Their schools were meant to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, and above all, to prepare them for baptism (Anderson, 1970; Bogonko, 1992). Most missions provided only basic education to ensure the inculcation of proper Christian principles and enable Africans attending the mission schools to become good Christians.

In this third millennium, the SDA church just as other religious denominations continues to provide different social services in Malawi, which include education services. The church operates a school system to ensure that its youth will receive a balanced physical, mental, moral, social, and practical education in harmony with denominational standards and ideals; having God as the source of all moral value and truth. The school prepares the youth to become effective witnesses and workers in the worldwide outreach program of the church. The stated interest of the church is in the optimum development of the whole child for both this life and the life hereafter (LaBorde, 2007). It should be mentioned here that the SDA church runs a



number of secondary schools in Malawi such as; Dedza Seventh-Day Adventist Secondary School, Lakeview Adventist Secondary School, Lunjika Secondary School, Malamulo Secondary School, Matandani Secondary School, Soche Secondary School, Chasefu Adventist Secondary School, and many others. These secondary schools have boarding facilities while some do not. All these Secondary Schools run from Form One to Form Four. In the Seventh Day Adventist church, there are some secondary schools that are controlled by the Conferences. The Malawi Adventist Union and the government also control a few in the system. In all Conferences, there are Education Directors who are responsible for overseeing education in their jurisdiction. These Education Directors report to the Education Director at the Union level. According to the SDA church, Education Director at the Malawi Union is also responsible for reporting to the Education Director of the Division who also reports to Education Director at the General Conference of the SDA church. The mission secondary schools in Malawi are directly influenced by the proprietor; the church. However, the government has also the influence through provision of the curriculum, national examinations and the like.

In past five years (2014 - 2018), the academic performance of almost all SDA secondary schools has not been pleasing. Based on the MSCE performance of one of the sampled secondary schools, it is indicated that in 2014 out of 48 candidates who sat for the MSCE examinations, 37(77%) passed while 12(25%) out of the total entry passed with less than 36 points.

The data also shows that in 2015 the pass rate increased to 83% (48 out of 59); this represents a 6% rate higher than the previous year. However, the number of candidates who passed with less than 36 points was 14 representing 24%.

In 2016, the pass rate was greater than the preceding two years with 85% (69 out of 97 candidates who sat for the examinations). On the contrary, the number of candidates who passed with less than 36 points was lower than the previous two years as it dropped to 17(18%).

It is also indicated that in 2017 the pass rate was 82% (65 out of 79 candidates who sat for the examinations) and the number of candidates who passed with less than 36 points dropped further to 13 (16%).

In 2018, the pass rate sharply dropped to 63% (90 out of 142 candidates who sat for the examinations). This was the lowest pass rate in five years. However, the good news is that in the year 2018, the number of candidates who passed with less than 36 points went higher than in all previous years as it reached 37(26%).

Based on the data above, it shows that the average pass rate of this SDA secondary school in the past five years was 78% and the average number of candidates who passed with less than 36 points was 22%. This clearly shows that each year at least many learners in the SDA secondary schools pass and qualify for the award of the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) certificate.

On sad note, many learners who pass the MSCE examinations fail to qualify for the admission into various public colleges and universities as most of them get more than 36 points. Therefore, it is evident that the academic performance in terms of learners who qualify for selection into the public universities and colleges is very low in the SDA secondary schools. This implies that there are different factors behind this low academic performance in these schools.

Based on earlier studies done by different scholars in other countries, in relation to the aim of this study, (Eshiwani,1983; Chileya, 2016; Kaimenyi, 2013; Yator, 2003; Arego, Role, & Makewa, 2014; Mussa, 2015; Malambo, 2012; Lazarowita & Tamir, 2006; Kulshretta, 2013;

Adino, 2015; Likando, 2017; Njuguna, 2011) it was revealed that academic performance in secondary schools is influenced by several factors. Some of the factors are school culture, socio-economic status of learners` parents and teachers, and availability of teaching/learning resources. Therefore, this study dwells much on these factors to establish on how they influence learners` academic performance in Malawi`s Seventh Day Adventist secondary schools as they are prevailing factors in many schools.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Mission schools have been famous for offering quality education since the introduction of formal education in Malawi. In most cases, mission schools have registered good performance in teaching, maintaining discipline as well as sending many learners to universities and colleges. The good academic performance, in this case, refers to high pass rate and good points scored by learners in the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) examinations enabling them to pursue various courses in public institutions of higher learning.

Observation has shown that at least many learners (in SDA secondary schools) pass the MSCE examinations, but most of them do not qualify for the selection into public institutions of higher learning. Such being the case, some guardians do not consider SDA secondary schools as the first choice when prioritizing where to send their wards because interest has gone down. Some of the previous studies done in Africa by different scholars (Mlangeni & Chiotcha, 2015; Adino, 2015; & Njuguna, 2011) have been on factors influencing academic performance, but in particular subjects. There also have been studies in Africa by some scholars (Likando, 2017; Yator, 2003; Maganga, 2016; Michael & Wumi, 2016; Chileya, 2016; Auma, 2014; Kemunto, 2013; & Hezekiah, 2016) on factors influencing academic performance of girls, single parented students in co-education government secondary schools, Day secondary schools and Grant-Aided secondary schools. These previous studies have revealed that performance of students is influenced by many factors; availability of learning and teaching materials, proximity of

learning institution, and school culture such as over enrolment, pupils' indiscipline, Learner-Teacher absenteeism, homework policy and institutional leadership.

As the above studies did not focus on the Malawi SDA secondary schools, much is not known on factors influencing the learner academic performance in these selected Malawi SDA secondary schools. This lack of valuable information presented the research gap for this study due to stakeholders' outcry about the low academic performance of these schools.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to establish factors influencing the low academic performance of learners in SDA secondary schools in Malawi.

### **1.4 Research questions**

#### **1.4.1 Main research question**

Why is there low learners' academic performance in Malawi's SDA secondary schools?

#### **1.4.2 Associated sub-questions**

- i. What factors are significant in influencing learners' academic performance in the SDA secondary schools?
- ii. How do these factors influence learners' academic performance?
- iii. What are the implications of these factors on learners' academic performance?
- iv. What academic interventions can enhance learners' academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi?

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

This study contributes to the practice as it has implications to the school administrators, teachers, students, and the church community in various ways. To the school administrators, who include head teachers/principals, deputy head teachers/registrars, and head of departments, the study provides information that can be used to improve management practices for improved academic performance. To the side of the teachers, the findings help them to check their conducts in the process of executing their duties since their conducts contribute either

positively or negatively towards learners' academic performance. The findings of this study will also trigger further research in trying to come up with ways of inducing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learners with a purpose of improving academic performance.

Beyond that, the study is also significant to the SDA church in the sense that their investment in education is expected to translate to quality education. Therefore, the findings will be of benefit to the education department of the SDA church to work tirelessly in dealing with school based factors that contribute to low academic performance, and eventually make their schools improve, compete with other schools, and get high recognition at national level. Such an achievement will attract many parents and learners all over the country. It should also be noted that the findings will play a vital role to the current well performing schools in Malawi to desist from the school based factors that negatively influence learners' academic performance in the SDA secondary schools.

### **1.6 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework known as 'The Effective School Model' by Lezotte (2010) guided this study. An Effective School refers to a school whose educators are responsible for producing acceptable results by putting emphasis on a number of traits. There are seven correlates or traits of effective schools and these are; strong instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly schools, climate of high expectations for success, frequent monitoring of student progress, positive home-school relations, and opportunity to learn/time on task (Lezotte, 2010).

To begin with, strong instructional leaders are always proactive and try to build team leadership and a culture conducive to learning and professional growth. In the effective school, the head teacher and others in administration play a role as instructional leaders where they communicate and model the mission of the school to staff, parents and students. Besides strong instructional leadership, having clear and focused mission assists in aligning programs and

activities for school improvement. This happens since everybody knows where he or she is going, and why. The focus is on achieving a shared vision, and all understand that their duty plays a role in achieving the vision as it develops from common beliefs and values.

In addition, a safe and orderly school, according to Lezotte (2010), is that which has a school climate and culture characterized by reasonable expectations for behaviour, consistent and fair application of rules and regulations, and caring, responsive relationships among adults and students. The school has a good environment that stimulates learning which makes learners feel respected and connected with the staff. Again, high expectation happens to be one of the correlates of effective schools stipulated by Lezotte. The entire teaching staff believes that all learners can learn and meet high standards. While recognizing that some learners must overcome significant barriers, these obstacles are not seen as impossible to achieve. Learners get basic as well as advanced skills that teachers believe they are requirements for all learners to achieve high levels.

Furthermore, frequent monitoring of teaching and learning is also an important part of the effective schools. This requires paying attention to both learners learning results and to the effectiveness of school and classroom procedures (Lezotte, 2010). Learning is monitored by tracking a variety of assessment results such as test scores, performances, and other evidence of learning while teaching is monitored by teachers themselves through self-reflection and by supervisors for program and teacher evaluation. Assessment results are used to focus and improve instructional programs.

Opportunity to learn and learners time on a task simply means that learners tend to learn most of the lessons they spend time on. This starts with teachers in understanding the essential learning objectives of every subject and class. After the understanding of the learning objectives, teachers should give learners an opportunity to learn such objectives as they also

allocate amount of classroom time to instruction on the essential skills. In an effective school, learners of all abilities, races, gender, and socio-economic status have equal opportunities to learn (Lezotte, 2010).

Above all, high level of family and community involvement play a vital role as effective schools model is concerned. According to Lezotte (2010), it should be understood that all have a responsibility to educate learners, not just teachers and staff in schools. Families as well as different stakeholders such as businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges and universities have an important role in this effort.

The theory was relevant to this study as the seven correlates of effective schools act as a blueprint for every school that has an ambition of high academic performance in its learners. By focusing on the Lezotte`s model of effective schools, measures have been suggested to improve SDA schools academically which have a record of low academic performance. For instance, one of the crucial correlates is instructional leadership; it is in all aspects required to implement change processes. Effective leaders, that is, head teachers and other staff members often have a leadership role of nurturing an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. As such, this model guided in understanding the system management of the SDA secondary schools in Malawi.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the study**

Delimitations are those characteristics within the researcher`s control, which limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study. Delimiting factors include the choice of objectives, the research questions, variables of interest, theoretical perspectives adopted and the population chosen for investigation (E. R. Babbie, 1973). The study population was drawn from three selected SDA secondary schools in Malawi due to logistical and time factors. The number of respondents was also limited as it involved a few teachers, pastors, board members and a few learners from form four classes. This study was limited to SDA mission secondary schools in

Malawi. As such, the study sample may not be representative of all SDA secondary schools in Malawi, hence, generalization of the study findings may not be a correct assumption.

The academic performance in these schools has been low hence the need to conduct this study so that the cause should be known and be positively addressed. Though there may have been other factors that influence performance in the SDA secondary schools, the study concentrated only on school culture, socio-economic, and teaching and learning resource factors.

### **1.8 Limitation of the study**

Limitations of the study are those characteristics of design or methodology that affect or influence the analysis of the findings of the research. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006) limitations are challenges anticipated or faced by the researcher. They are the constraints on generalizability, applications to practice, and usefulness of findings as a result of the ways in which the study design was chosen or the method used to establish internal and external validity (E. R. Babbie, 1973). The researcher faced a challenge in accessing school records, as the schools did not successfully keep these records.

### **1.9 Operational definition of terms**

**Academic performance:** how well a student meets standards set out by the Ministry of Education and the learning institution itself.

**Low academic performance:** where at least many students pass MSCE examinations but with more than 36 points which do not make them qualify to study in public institutions of higher learning.

**Division:** It is a church organization formed by a group of several churches under the Unions

**District secondary schools:** schools that accommodate learners within that district and in most cases have boarding facilities.

**Effective learning:** This refers to learners being available, focused and committed to undertake learning willingly.



**General Conference (GC) of Seventh-Day Adventists:** The highest organizational structure of the SDA world church. The administrative headquarters is located in Washington, D.C.

**National secondary schools:** highly rated boarding schools that receive brightest performers from primary schools across the country (nationwide).

**Poor performing schools:** refer to secondary schools in Malawi that consistently produce low pass rate, unsatisfactory points and small number of pupils selected to go to the public colleges and universities after MSCE examinations

**Union:** The third highest level of the world church organization of Seventh-Day Adventist. It is a church organization formed by a group of several local conferences or missions (or fields, sections, districts, or area churches).

**Well performing school:** This refers to a secondary school that consistently produce high pass rate, good points and many students go to the public colleges and universities.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Academic performance of learners has been the subject of intensive research over the past years. It has become an issue of standards and quality in education as judged from the performance of students in many Examination Councils. However, various reports have documented the poor examination performance of learners due to a good number of factors. Therefore, in line with Lezotte (2010) who stresses of the effectiveness of the school, the review of the literature in this study is also based on how academic performance can be influenced by the following factors; school culture factors, social-economic factors, and teaching and learning resource factors.

#### **2.1. School culture and school academic performance**

##### **2.1.1. Understanding the concept of school culture**

School is an institution that accommodates individuals from different lifestyles who also have different backgrounds, cultures and different characters. In a school setting, teachers, support staff members, students as well as parents come from various areas in which school plays a role as the meeting zone where all these individuals interact with one another. In the light of this, when these individuals fuse together in one new society which is school, a new culture is produced which in education circles is called 'School culture'. Scholars, based on what they want to give more emphasis, have different views regarding the meaning of school culture. Academically, school culture is defined in many ways though such various definitions point to the same thing. According to Short & Greer (1997) school culture is the traditions, beliefs, policies, and norms within a school that can be shaped, enhanced, and maintained through the school's principal and teacher-leaders. Confeld (2016) looks at school culture almost in line

with Short and Greer as reflection of shared values, beliefs, and traditions between staff members. Though talking about the same thing, Stolp & Smith (1994) go beyond the limits of workers or staff members as stressed by Short and Greer, and Confeld. In the view of Stolp and Smith, school culture is the historically transmitted pattern of meanings that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, traditions and myths understood, may be in varying degrees by members of the school community. In referring to members of the school community, they look at school culture as complex webs of traditions and rituals built up over time as teachers, parents and administrators work together and deal with crises and accomplishments. More succinctly, school culture in the words of Van Houtte (2005) is a set of beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions. However, the term also encompasses more concrete issues; the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity. Despite all these definitions of school culture, this study adopts much the definition presented by Van Houtte (2005) as it tackles a number of practices in school which have strong impact on the academic performance of learners in school as described by in the Effective Schools Model by Lezotte (2010).

Barth (2002) asserts that a school's culture is a complex pattern of practices deeply embedded in the very core of the organization. Basing on Barth's assertion, school's culture has more influence over the life of the school community than the influence of the school top most leaders like the school board, principal, teachers, and the parents. In a school setting, an individual or one group of people does not construct the school culture. In simpler terms, teachers and the management usually form social groups with their own rules, norms values and standard of behaviour that they denote as ethos of a school. Ethos reflects expectations about children's work and behaviour. This is the reason Lezotte (2010) points out that for a

school to be effective, leaders and teachers need to understand that their duty plays a role in achieving the vision as it is developed from common beliefs and values. On the other end, students also form their own culture in which they include rules, norms values and standard of behaviour they think are good to their well-being. This means that students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other staff members all contribute to the school's culture apart from other influences like the community in which the school is located, the policies that govern how it operates, or the principles upon which the school is founded.

### **2.1.2. Influence of school culture on school academic performance**

Basically, school cultures can be divided into two basic folds, namely; positive culture and negative culture (Van Houtte, 2005). The school culture that leads to a favourable professional satisfaction, morale, and effectiveness, as well as student learning, fulfilment, and well-being is deemed as positive culture. One more definition of positive school culture captures the concept broadly to include the school-wide ethos and the culture of individual classrooms; high expectations for learning and achievement; a safe and caring environment; shared values and relational trust; a powerful pedagogy and engagement; a professional faculty culture; and partnerships with families and the community (Taylor, 2011). Meanwhile, the school culture that perpetuates the undesirable aspects in a school is strongly considered as negative culture. School culture relates to students' achievement in that if school culture is not hospitable to learning, then students' achievement can suffer. This happens because school culture has a more powerful effect on students' achievement than any other variable.

Discipline encompasses a number of things and it is one of the elements of school culture in almost all secondary schools. It is strongly believed that discipline and academic performance are closely related. This means to say where there is discipline there is high academic performance and where there is lack of discipline there is low academic performance as is the

case in many secondary schools. The issue of discipline is widely covered in the Effective Schools Model by Lezotte (2010). Lezotte in his third correlate talks about safe and orderly schools where he believes that for achievement in school to be seen there must be a culture and climate characterized by reasonable expectations for good behaviour, consistent and fair application of rules and regulations, and caring, responsive relationships among adults and students. In an investigation done in selected Adventist secondary day schools in Northern and Central California, Rhoads (1986) found that there was lack of Christian behaviour and social morality in the schools, and parents and students desired improved disciplinary practices. Similarly, in the study conducted in Tanzania by Arego, Role, & Makewa (2014) on factors that influence the implementation of Adventist holistic education in Mara conference it was revealed that Mara Conference secondary schools were challenged by students' indiscipline which had a contribution to poor academic performance. In the light of this, Orara (1997) argues that indiscipline is a force that prompts individuals or groups not to observe the rules, regulations and procedures that are deemed necessary for the proper functioning and where no one will be able to tell what is supposed to be done, how and when. In some secondary schools, discipline extends the restriction of the use of gadget by students during their free time. Possession of gadgets by students in secondary school is something which is to be taken with serious caution as it has much negative effects on students' academic performance. Basing on the study conducted by H. Ahmed & Wais (2012) on reasons for the low level of academic achievement among high school students from teachers and students perspective, it showed a number of reasons, including the large number of distractions around the students like the spread of mobile phone. Again, Likando (2017) in similar research, her study also established that abuse of gadgets like phones and internet facilities were some of the factors contributing to poor academic performance among female secondary school pupils of Lusaka district in Zambia. On the same issue of discipline, in terms of possession of gadgets, Maganga (2016)

further indicates that even if teens were pretend to learn, they lose in between many hours for non-academic activities like chatting on email, smart phones which makes them to have poor concentration in their studies. This implies that discipline, as school culture, should be well practised as its elements contribute heavily to the academic performance of the school.

Focussing on social relationships, as part of the school culture, students are likely to perform well when there are healthy social relationships in school: ranging from the chaplain, principal, teachers, students to parents. On the other hand, unhealthy social relationships lead to poor performance. Wheatley (2001) asserts that relationships, and not individuals alone, are the basic organizing unit of life. Similarly, the Effective Schools Model by Lezotte (2010) promotes the issue positive relationship among different education stakeholders. Lezotte not only does he stress on involvement of the teachers by the principal in the mission of the school but also the strong involvement of families and communities as all have a responsibility to educate students. He asserts that employees need to engage and align themselves into activities of the organization to make them responsible. He also looks at employees' team orientation in order to support each other in achieving goals. In simple terms, Lezotte's ideas of earning achievement in the organization calls for good social relationships among different players concerned with education in a particular school.

Additionally, the study conducted on school culture and performance by Heck & Marcoulides (1996) who studied organizational values in Singapore secondary schools found that schools where positive social and professional relationships among staff members were developed, reported higher student achievement. Another study by Klevan & Villavicencio (2016) in New York Schools on strategies for improving school culture where the emphasis was on transforming high school experience for Black and Latino young men condemned segregation as it did not promote good relationship in school. Klevan and Villavicencio further concluded

that teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil strong relationships tend to contribute to the students' success. Their findings also revealed that girls tend to have good relationships with teachers and more academic oriented with peers as compared with boys. While the Klevan and Villavicencio's study talks about academic success due to good relationships between girls and teachers, the study does not offer a conclusive direction whether girls' good relationships with teachers attributes to either male or female teachers, or both sexes of teachers. One interesting outcome of the analysis by most researchers shows that the close relationship between girls and male teachers has been a compromising factor to good performance. Chumi (2001) argues that close relationships between girls and male teachers give the advantage to the male teachers to sexually abuse their students in words and action. This unfortunate development was also pointed out in the study performed by Youze, Fanta, Balyage, & Makewa (2014) on Teacher Ethical Principles and Practice in Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Schools in district of Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania. This revealed that teachers related well with fellow workers, participated in beneficial activities for the school and communicated with kind words. However, a blow to academic achievement was noted in relation to Chumi's observation as students indicated that teachers were not treating them equally and fairly as they were having sexual encounters with students, teachers requesting for financial, sexual and other favours from girls. In similar case, Barret (2005) observed that the Tanzanian press and other media regularly reported on the teacher misbehaviour in terms of having sexual relations with their students. On other perspective, social relationship between students and their parents is also instrumental to the students' success. Parents have got a big role to play in helping their ward to become a more responsible adult in society. However, most parents in modern society do not have enough time to socialise with their children as much responsibility is left in the hands of either a house boy or a maid (Youze et al., 2014).

The enrolment of students and recruitment of school workers matters most to the academic performance of the school. By-passing the normal recommended procedure for enrolling students and recruiting workers in secondary schools compromise the academic results. There are cases where some students enrolled in secondary school do not meet the requirements to be in secondary school. While acknowledging high expectations as one of the correlates of effective schools stipulated by Lezotte (2010) in which he argues that teaching staff believe that all students can learn and meet high standards, it should be understood students enrolled without meeting the requirements give headache to teachers as their uptake of new knowledge and skills is very poor. Basically this calibre of students mainly contributes to poor academic performance of the school. To the part of teachers and even administrators who are employed without meeting required standards for their job, in most cases pose a great challenge to meeting the school goals in which one of such goals is good academic performance. Teachers almost determine the performance of school. If the culture of school in terms of recruiting teachers is not so well, the end result becomes having teachers who are fond of absenteeism, insubordination to the higher authority, full of immorality and many more. For instance, in the study done by Likando (2017) showed that teachers absenteeism was one of the school factors contributed to poor academic performance among female secondary school pupils of Lusaka District. Apart from mere teachers, the principal as one of the workers has a great role to play in school. Therefore the post needs someone who is well vest in school administration rather than just picking anyone because has good church standing. No wonder many researchers of school improvement and culture building also share the view that the role of the principal is paramount in establishing and influencing the school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1994; DuFour, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). In the study about perceptions of leadership characteristics of principals who influence positive school culture in a Midwest Adventist Union by Savory (2014), revealed that Principals influenced a positive



school culture by embracing their multifaceted role as chief culture leaders in their schools. Similarly, in a study to find the effects of principal's leadership behaviour on school learning culture in some selected secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, Oluremi (2008) found out that leadership behaviour of a school principal really affects the school learning either in a positive or negative manner. Furthermore, the research conducted by Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides (1990) indicated that school-based administrators play an important role in the establishment of school culture and instructional structures that are the prerequisites for student academic achievement. This entails that if the principal hired does not know his obligation, the school is likely to adopt toxic school culture which eventually may lead to poor academic performance. Rhoads (1986) studied student and parent perceptions of the educational philosophy, academic program, social climate, among other factors, that contributed to enrolment and attrition at selected Adventist secondary day schools in Northern and Central California. Rhoads, in one of his conclusions argued that administrators' and teachers' performances were perceived as inadequate in many areas of Adventist secondary day school education. This shows that though teachers and principals were there but were inefficient as per their jobs demanded. This prompts a conclusion that the recruitment procedures were not followed or there is a need to reshape the recruitment procedures.

School culture is also reflected in the manner of communication. Professional dialogue in school acts as drive for improvement and successful implementation of the school goals and objectives. Communication that happens within the school whether the communication in professional learning communities, staff meetings, leadership teams, parent information forums, pupil-teacher interactions, among clusters of colleagues or in the many informal ways that people interact, the nature and quality of these conversations will determine the quality of the school (Adventist Schools Australia, 2013). This means that better communication lead to better actions and vice-versa. No wonder, clear and focused vision and mission as a correlate

is stressed on as when there is good communication everyone knows where they are going and why (Lezotte, 2010). The findings of the Nzisa (2014) in her study investigating the effects of school culture on students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination in Matungulu district in Kenya, affirmed that communication plays a vital role on academic performance of the school. In her study, she observed that there was a good communications through school assemblies and also through other forms which had a positive impact on students' KCSE performance. Another study by Arego et al. (2014) on factors that influence the implementation of Adventist holistic education in Mara conference, Tanzania, found that poor communication channels in schools were contributing factor towards cases of indiscipline in schools and also poor academic performance. When the principal ignites communication, he/she should ensure that does not dictate to students, staff, and parents rather they have an active voice in their school community. This makes them build a culture of inclusivity and eliminate feelings of distrust, uncertainty, and hostility. Robert (2008) in his book entitled "How to say the right thing every time: Communicating well with students, staff, parents, and the public", argues that when school leaders communicate effectively, students learn, parents and community members understand and support what the school is doing, and the process of teaching and learning moves forward. He further says that, when educators fail to communicate fully, misinformation, misinterpretations, misunderstandings, and mixed messages can cause the system's wheels to spin or come off altogether. This clearly shows that if proper mode of communication is neglected the school is likely to plunge into academic disaster.

Continuous assessment also portrays the school culture in SDA secondary schools. Continuous Assessment (CA) has been preached in various policies of the department of education however common understanding is that most teachers are struggling to use CA in their teaching. Different authors have defined Continuous Assessment differently based on their point of

emphasis. According to Nitko (2004) Continuous Assessment is an on-going process of gathering and interpreting information about student learning that is used in making decisions about what to teach and how well students have learned. It is also defined by Airasian (1997) as an assessment approach which depicts the full range of sources and methods teachers use to gather, interpret and synthesize information about learners. Based on how CA is defined by different scholars, it could infer that CA is an assessment approach which involves the use of a variety of assessment instruments, assessing various components of learning, not only the intellectual processes but also behaviours, personality traits and skills. CA is very vital in education, as it plays a significant role in teaching and learning experiences since it is an essential part of the instructional programmes where it provides information on the basis of which many educational decisions are taken. Lezotte (2010) in his Effective Schools Model also puts emphasis on frequent monitoring of student progress in achieving school academic performance. Similarly, Nitko (2004) acknowledges that increased use of Continuous Assessment leads to high quality of learning. In the study done by Mwebaza (2010), teachers' and students' perceptions showed that there were many continuous assessment strategies to be used which had a positive relationship to students' performance in the final examinations. The study done by Maganga (2016) focused on the factors that affect the academic performance in secondary schools in Ilala district, Tanzania. It noted that one of the factors that contributed to the poor academic performance was that schools were observed to skip formative evaluation because of high costs of stationeries.

## **2.2. Socio-economic status and school academic performance**

According to Parson, Stephanie, & Deborah (2001), Socio-economic Status (SES) is the term used to distinguish between People's relative position in a society in terms of family income, political power, educational background and occupational prestige. This entails that SES is a

measure of one's combined economic and social status and tends to be positively associated with better health. Socio-economic status is one of the major factors found to be related to learners' academic achievement. The SES of a child is most commonly determined by combining parents' educational level, occupational status and income level (Jeynes,2002). The central argument by Jeynes is that families play an important role in the success of the children as school academic performance is concerned. In line with Jeynes, Nzamutuma (1992) postulates that well to do and educated parents can secure a positive environment for learning by providing school materials, reviewing key subjects with children, helping children with homework, reinforcing school attendance, and rewarding children when they excel in their school work. This is opposite with the low income families as they may not be able to provide an appropriate learning environment for their young people which eventually result into low academic performance. Children from low-SES families are less likely to have experiences that encourage the development of fundamental skills of reading acquisition, such as phonological awareness, vocabulary, and oral language (Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013). Studies have shown that Children from low-SES families enter high school with average literacy skills five years behind those of high-income students (Reardon, Valentino, Kalogrides, Shores, & Greenberg, 2013). For instance, low SES in childhood is related to poor cognitive development, language, memory, socio-emotional processing, and consequently poor income and health in adulthood. Meanwhile, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), individuals within the top family income quartile are eight (8) times more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree by age twenty-four (24) as compared to individuals from the lowest family income quartile. Based on the study done by Diemer & Ali (2009), those from higher social class backgrounds tend to be more successful in developing career aspirations and are generally better prepared for the world of work because of access to resources such as career offices, guidance counsellors, better schools, high level "social actors," and familial experience with

higher education. Gama & Jesus (1994) concurs with Diemer & Ali by reporting that in Brazil education of parents plays a great role in children's academic achievement. In Brazil, educated parents are able to provide an adequate cultural and psychological environment that fosters the positive school academic performance in their children. Similarly, in Africa, learners from wealthier families have an added advantaged over those from poor families regardless of the same ability. Most learners from poor families experience many school difficulties, such as lack of basic school materials (textbooks, pens, or exercise books), that have serious consequences on their school academic performance.

Beside socio-economic status and educational level of parents being influential towards learner academic performance, socio-economic status of teachers also matters a lot. Learners academic performance does not only depend upon the teacher's knowledge and teaching skills but there are many other contributing factors that influence the overall performance of learners. Based on the literature available, a good number of scholars have argued that teacher's socio-economic status plays an important role education and it has an effect on learner`s academic performance. Socio-economic status captures many other aspects like; job satisfaction, motivation, and continuation of teaching career. In the study done by Arain, Jafri, Ramzan, & Ali (2014) on the impact of teacher wages on students' achievement revealed that there is a great impact of teacher remuneration on students' performance. As SES touches teacher remuneration, in long run the morale of a teacher becomes affected too. This means that if the teacher`s SES is high, the morale also becomes high which leads to teacher`s feelings of belongingness, togetherness, achievement, self-and group-esteem interest in doing the extra work to achieve high academic performance in learners. In contrast, low teacher`s SES causes low morale and makes a teacher to lose interest in doing the extra work which eventually affects learners` academic performance in a negative way. This happens because low morale teachers exhibit a higher frequency of being absent from the workplace as they do not feel as committed

to or as invested in their jobs. In the study on the effect of teachers' socioeconomic status on school life in elementary schools of Merauke district, Papua, Indonesia conducted by Werang, Lewaherilla, & Irianto (2017) affirmed that teachers SES has a positive and significant effect on school's life, in regards to teachers job satisfaction, teachers morale, and teachers organizational commitment.

In Africa, a number of learners register poor academic performance because the governments undermining the welfare of teachers. Teachers play a vital role as they are the figures who assist learners to acquire knowledge. In many countries the socioeconomic status of teachers is almost very poor as the governments do not put their welfare at heart. Although teaching is a noble profession, in Africa teaching profession is not valued since Teachers have so many concerns not taken on board by the governments to improve their socioeconomic status. There are several challenges met by teachers in Africa and some of them are; poor salaries, delayed payment of their little salaries, poor or no housing, intimidation by their bosses, lack of promotion, and many more. All these challenges emanates from poor governance, as the African governments take a deliberate blind eye on such concerns. These challenges make teachers frustrated and demoralized as a result their way of delivery in class is negatively affected. This can be well understood by looking at some of the phrases used by teachers like 'work as you earn' which simply means that because the salary is very little you need to apply little effort too or do not apply your maximum effort.

In terms of housing, many teachers rent houses in areas far from work place. This makes teachers walk long distances to work due to incapacity of schools to have enough houses to accommodate all teachers. It is also noted that houses in which many teachers live are of substandard such that they do not have piped water and electricity. Such living conditions greatly affect teachers' preparations for lessons and eventually they do not deliver in class as

expected. Sometimes due to poor working conditions which teachers are exposed to, the rate of teacher absenteeism becomes rampant. All such grievances that affect teachers eventually do have a negative influence on the learner academic performance.

### **2.3. Teaching/Learning resources and school academic performance**

Quality and relevance in the education system is compromised because of failure to provide a good number of teaching and learning resources in schools. For education to be of quality and relevant, there are a number of resources needed which include; teaching and learning aids, laboratory equipment, text books and the like. This is evident by the study done by Karemera (2003) who found that students' performance is significantly correlated with satisfaction with academic environment and the resources of library, computer lab and other important resources in the institution. Karemera (2003) noted that availability of resources posed a positive effect on school performance and school achievement. It is primarily the responsibility of the government and the proprietor to ensure that all needed teaching and learning resources to aid learning are adequately available in all schools.

#### **2.3.1. Textbooks and school academic performance**

Textbooks play a vital role to both teachers and learners in the teaching and learning process. A teacher needs books to teach effectively. This means that availability of just one type of the textbook is not enough for thorough preparation by the teacher. Similarly, for students to learn properly there is need for several textbooks at their disposal. In the view of Ahmed (2003), the provision of educational materials like textbooks in school enhances good academic performance of pupils as such resources facilitate effective teaching and learning in schools. In

the same line on the impact of the textbooks on academic achievements, some scholars (Heyneman & Loxley, 1983; Walberg, 1984; Beeby, 1986) have revealed that textbooks provide a huge basis of information for students as well as the course of study for the subject. Exploring the effects of textbooks and other factors on student achievements, Lockheed, Vail, & Fuller (1986) found out in their longitudinal study from a national sample of eight grade Mathematics classrooms in Thailand that textbooks may affect achievement by substituting for additional post-secondary Mathematics education of teachers and by delivering a more comprehensive curriculum.

In the studies conducted in Pakistan by Mushtaq & Khan (2012) on factors affecting students' academic performance at Rawalpinda and Islamabad private colleges of Pakistan though focused on different factors such as class schedules, class size, home environment, environment of the class and many more revealed that learning facilities indeed do affect academic performance. In this study by Mushtaq and Khan highlighted that learning facilities include school libraries which have textbooks that occupy a dominant and crucial place in any school system and their absence affect academic performance because they provide service and guidance to readers through supporting all functions of school teaching.

Ahmed (2003) laments that in most of the nation's secondary schools teaching and learning takes place in a most unpleasant environment where there are lack of basic materials like textbooks and thus hindering the fulfilment of educational objectives. Another study conducted in Kenya by Atieno (2014) in Embakasi district on the influence of teaching and learning resources on students' performance in the free day secondary education, revealed that teaching and learning materials were overstretched due to annual increase in enrolment rates which compromised the quality of education. In the same line with Ahmed, Odulaja & Ogunwemimo (1989) argue that while the selection of a textbook has been declared to be vital to academic



achievement, it is sad to say that relevant textbooks are not always available for teaching and learning activities.

In addition, much was revealed in the study conducted in Zambia on factors affecting pupil performance in Grant-Aided and Non-Grant Aided secondary schools in Western province by (Malambo, 2012). The study showed variations in terms of learners from non-grant aided schools (who were under performing) as compared to those from grant-aided schools. The sub-standard performance of pupils from non-grant aided schools was attributed to inadequate learning and teaching resources, over enrolment, low teacher morale and pupil indiscipline amongst others. On the other hand, good performance in grant-aided secondary schools was attributed to adequate learning and teaching materials, high teacher morale, strong school academic policies and high level of pupil discipline.

As such, this study gives evidence of the influence of resources towards high performance. Similarly, in most schools in Malawi the issue is not different as most needed resources are not available, and if available they are inadequate and not in good condition. In Malawian schools, it is common to see one textbook being shared by more than ten learners during a lesson which makes it very difficult for learners to follow the lessons properly. For instance, the survey carried out in Mangochi district in Mkumba Zone, the pupil-textbook ratio was 6:1 which clearly indicates that learning process is likely to be compromised (MoEST, 2014).

### **2.3.2. Science laboratories and school academic performance**

For learner academic performance to be good in sciences, there is also need for good science laboratories with all required materials. In most schools where there is poor performance in science subjects, there is lack of textbooks and chemicals for laboratory experiment experience (Myers, 2000). Malawi, as a country, has a big challenge in terms of science subjects. Many

schools do not have enough qualified science teachers, textbooks, laboratories and laboratory equipment for teaching science subjects (MOEST, 2000).

Worst still, the education system in Malawi enforces the teaching of science subjects even though there are no enough apparatuses in the school laboratories. In many Community Day Secondary Schools, there are no laboratories to enable the efficient teaching of science subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Home Economics. In schools where there are laboratories, in most cases, chemicals and other lab materials are in short supply, if not expired and out-dated. Such factors compromise the standards of education and learner academic performance as they find it hard to follow the content since science subjects require much practical activities. A practical activity is as an act of science students engaging in and equipping themselves with hands-on skills. Lazarowita & Tamir (2006) argue that practical work is important because it provides opportunities for students to perform various hands-on-activities. These practical works also give students many opportunities to use their minds to discover general laws and principles of science. In the view of Kulshretta (2013), practical activities in science provide a number of advantages which include; skills development, planning, manipulation of equipment, observation, analysing, evaluating, experiential learning, testing out own ideas, testing out theories, developing of problem solving strategies and team work.

### **2.3.3. Stationery and school academic performance**

Literature has indicated that to realize success, the school must provide adequate facilities and resources to both teachers and learners. According to Eshiwani (1983), the differences in provision of school facilities and resources such like stationery amount to differences in achievement. According to the Republic of Kenya (1999), the quality and adequacy of resources such as physical facilities, equipment, teaching and learning materials have a direct

bearing on quality as they determine how effectively the curriculum is implemented. The argument by the government has been that quality cannot be achieved and sustained if the resources and facilities are not available and in sufficient quantity and quality. For teachers to be active there is need for stationery to administer continuous assessments, write school records and the like. The absence of stationery, such as paper, pens, chart papers, printers and many more, negatively influence the learners' academic performance. In the study conducted by Amukowa & Karue (2013) on analysis of factors that lead to poor performance in Kenya certificate of secondary examination in Embu district in Kenya, teachers were of the opinion that given the correct and adequate requirements like stationery, they would do better. The study revealed that they were going through hard times because of lack of instructional materials or resources. Similarly, in Malawi many teachers fail to work effectively due to lack of stationery hence influencing the learner academic performance in the negatively.

#### **2.4. Summary of literature review**

This chapter has discussed the relevant literature on some factors influencing performance of learners in schools. The focus has been on the influence of school culture, socioeconomic status, and teaching/learning resources on secondary school learners

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter deals in detail with the description of the methods that were applied in carrying out this research study. Basically the chapter explains how the data in this study was collected, analysed, and interpreted. Methodology has been defined as the systematic, theoretical analysis of the procedures applied to a field of study (Kothari, 2011). The chapter is organized under the following sections: research paradigm, research approach, research design, study area, the target population, sample size, sampling procedures, instruments of data collection, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical consideration.

#### **3.1 Research paradigm**

Generally, research is conducted within specific paradigms out of a number of paradigms, namely; Post-positivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatism. Paradigms present different ways of viewing the world and open up new understandings of social realities. This study was based on the pragmatic worldview, which according to Creswell (1998) arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions (as in post positivism). In the view of Patton (1990), there is a concern with applications—what works—and solutions to problems being studied. Creswell (1998) further states that pragmatism instead of focusing on methods, researchers emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem since using pluralistic approaches help to derive knowledge about the problem. This paradigm was workable in this study because the researcher tried to learn more about the factors that influence learners` academic performance in SDA secondary schools.

### **3.2 Research approach**

There are about three research designs; qualitative (the design that generates words as data for analysis), quantitative (one that generates numbers as data for analysis) and mixed-method design which comprises both qualitative and quantitative research designs (Creswell, 1998). This was a mixed research study. However, the study largely used qualitative methodology. In dealing with sub-question 1, the study used a quantitative methodology in showing the significant factors influencing learners' academic performance. This study was largely qualitative in nature because it wanted to develop in-depth knowledge about how low academic performance is caused and its implications. Therefore, sub-questions 2, 3 and 4 provided qualitative data. Laws, Harper, and Marcus (2003) point out that if the researcher needs to develop in-depth knowledge about a certain phenomenon, the use of qualitative method is recommended especially interviews method and focused group discussions. It is also argued that qualitative approach is preferable where the goal is to seek an understanding of a process or phenomenon (E. Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Creswell, 2009).

### **3.3 Research design**

Burns (2000) defines research design as a plan or strategy aimed at enabling answers to be obtained to research questions. Based on this definition, this study adopted a descriptive research design with the intention of collecting data from respondents on factors influencing the low academic performance of learners during MSCE Examinations in three selected SDA mission secondary schools in Malawi. Descriptive design is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. This approach gives the researcher an opportunity to gather factual information necessary for decision making. Also the researcher identifies the opinions, feelings and practices of the subjects through discussion (Gay & Airasian, 2000). For this study, this design was ideal because the researcher was interested in establishing and reporting the factors which influence academic performance in the selected SDA mission secondary schools in Malawi. This method was

employed since the study aimed at seeking opinions and facts from the targeted population. The research mainly used primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained by using observation checklist, face-to-face interviews and questionnaires while secondary data was obtained by analysing school documents, especially the MANEB result sheets.

### **3.4 Study area**

The study was conducted in three Adventist secondary schools found in Malawi. The three Adventist secondary schools are under the Malawi Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists Church that consists of three conferences namely; North Malawi Conference, Central Malawi Conference and South Malawi Conference. These schools were chosen because they have a common problem of low academic performance at form four MANEB examinations leading to few students having opportunity to study into public universities. Moreover, the selection of these three schools was based on one school from each conference with the purpose of representing SDA secondary schools in all three conferences so that the findings should reflect factors impinging good academic performance in SDA secondary schools across the country.

### **3.5 Study Population**

Bryman (2004) defines population as the universe of units from which the sample is drawn. Meanwhile, Kombo and Tromp (2006) define population as a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement. In this regard, this study had the population comprising school principals, station pastors, members of the school board teachers and students in selected secondary schools. The selection of school principals, station pastors, students and teachers in selected secondary schools was based on the idea that they would provide tangible information on the prevailing factors influencing the learner academic performance in the SDA schools since they are part and parcel of such societies. The members

of school board were also involved as Lezotte (2010) puts emphasis on high level of family and community involvement as they play a vital role as effective schools model is concerned.

### **3.6 Sample size**

According to Kothari (2011) sample size refers to the number of participants selected from the population. This sample should have similar characteristics as that of the population. The sample for this study was 54 participants in which 24 of the 54 participants were females comprising 6 teachers, 15 learners, and 3 members of the school board. 30 of the 54 participants were males comprising 6 teachers, 15 learners, 3 station pastors, thus 1 from each mission, 3 School administrators, and 3 members of the school board. This means that at each school there were 4 teachers, 10 learners, 1 principal and 2 members of the school board. These numbers in each category gave a good representation of the study population since these schools currently do not have big population of teachers as well as students. Most important thing to note is that, the number of male participants was higher than of the female participants because the school administrators and station pastors were males. Collecting different views on the topic of study from a minimum of 54 participants made the study sample adequate to bring out trustworthy findings.

### **3.7 Sampling procedure**

In the view of Kombo and Tromp (2006) sampling technique is the procedure a researcher uses to gather people, places or things to study. This is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements of the characteristics found in the entire group. The study used purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The purposive sampling is the sampling type in which the unit to be observed is selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative (E. R. Babbie, 2008). For this reason, the researcher used purposive sampling to select three low performing SDA mission secondary schools. The

researcher, using his judgment purposively also targeted the form four students who started their form one at the study schools as they were believed to have reliable data since they had stayed at school for a good number of years. Similarly, school principals of SDA secondary schools and station pastors were selected purposively as it was assumed that they had been in the SDA education system for some time and as such were well vested with the administration and performance of the SDA secondary schools. According to Orodho and Kombo (2002) the power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich in cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues under study. For the members of the school board, purposive sampling was also used as the study targeted community members that were familiar with how SDA secondary schools are administered. On the other hand, simple random sampling is used when there are no complexities involved as what a researcher need is just a relatively small, clearly defined population to use in the method (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The researcher decided to use simple random sampling because the population of study was small and hence each member of the population had equal chance of being selected. In this research, two types of paper marked 'Yes' and 'No' were put in a box for teachers and learners to pick randomly, according to gender. Those who picked 'Yes' pieces of paper were selected to participate in the research. Furthermore, the researcher used simple random sampling to select few participants from form four students, teachers, and members of the school board from all the three SDA secondary schools.

### **3.8 Research instruments**

In order to get data from teachers, pupils, members of the school board, station pastors, and principals, in-depth individual interview guides, questionnaire, and naturalistic observations checklist and document analysis were used as tools to acquire information as much as possible. Details about the instruments are provided below.



### **3.8.1 Questionnaire**

In the study, data was obtained using learners` and teachers` questionnaires composed of close-ended and open- ended questions. Close-ended questions provided quantitative data while open- ended questions provided qualitative data. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the learners and teachers to obtain pertinent information relating to the school culture, socio-economic factors, and teaching/learning resources in how they influence learner academic performance. The instrument was also adopted because it offers the researcher an opportunity to collect a large amount of information within a short-time and the questions are standardized (Orodho, 2009). The questionnaires administered during data collection are found in the appendices section.

### **3.8.2 In-depth individual interview guides**

According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) in-depth refers to seeking information that is more profound than was usually accessible at the interpersonal relationships. The one-to-one in-depth interviews were helpful because they provided a means of gathering detailed information. Individual open ended question interviews were conducted with administrators, members of the school board, and station pastors in the SDA church. Individual interviews were conducted with one person at a time to reduce the effects of peer influence and some participants could become uncomfortable discussing the issue in a group setting (Campbell, 2000). With regards to in-depth individual interviews, face to face and telephone interviews were conducted. In carrying out in-depth individual interviews a semi-structured interview guide was used. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006) semi-structured interview guide is based on the use of a list of questions or topics to be covered in the interview. On the same token, Creswell (1998) states that it is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open ended questions that prompt discussion. This instrument`s strength rests in the ability it has to allow respondents to discuss and raise issues that the researcher may not have considered. This research instrument was suitable for the current study because in depth

information was gathered due to the open ended structure of the questions. It also allowed the researcher to probe more information from the participants in order to obtain new ideas.

### **3.8.3 Observation guide**

According to Creswell (2012) observation is one of the research methods highly systematic, and its use must be precise, systematic and well planned so that the findings can be considered scientific. Observational methods may be categorized as open if the researcher simply observes the behaviour of interest without any specific objective in mind, while closed observation is when the researcher decides before carrying out the investigation exactly what to look for and when to do so. Of the two types of observations which are laboratory and naturalistic, this study used naturalistic observation guide.

### **3.8.4 Document analysis**

Document analysis involves thorough examining of the existing documents, either to understand their practical content or to illuminate deeper meanings that may reveal their style and coverage. Maree (2010) claims that the use of document analysis may shed more light on the phenomenon under investigation. The research analysed school documents particularly MANEB result sheets of the past ten years to validate the argument that in these schools there was real low academic performance. Document analysis also assisted to understand the implications of the factors that influence learners' academic performance.

### **3.9 Reliability of instruments**

The reliability procedure is described by Amelang (2009) as the degree to which measurements of the same phenomenon by different professionals will yield the same results. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. To ensure reliability of the instruments, the researcher used similar instruments in more than one research site. Sites improve the reliability of data than if the study had relied on the single source for data collection. Besides

that, instruments were thoroughly checked by the supervisor as is the expert in the field of research.

### **3.10 Validity of instruments**

Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inference which were based on research results (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). In this study, to ensure the validity of the research results the researcher applied more than one method when getting information from different groups of participants. This involved employing the in-depths interviews, questionnaires, natural observation, and document analysis. Though some of these methods were directed towards specific participants still all methods aimed at exploring the factors influencing academic performance in the sample schools. The results obtained from the in-depths interviews were therefore cross checked with other methods in order to learn more about factors that influence learner academic performance. In light of this, the researcher took data that claimed to be prevailing in all methods. Again, the approach employed varied samples where learners, members of the school board members, Education Directors, principals and teachers were involved to inform the study on the factors that influence academic performance of the learners in the selected secondary schools of the SDA church.

### **3.11 Procedure for data collection**

Data collection refers to the gathering of information to serve or to prove some facts (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). After approving the proposal, the researcher sought authority from the SDA Malawi Union Education Department to go into study schools to conduct research. Further, the researcher asked for permission from people in-charge of the study sites and participants. The researcher also sought consent in advance from the targeted members of the school board and station pastors for their participation in the study. After being authorized, the researcher visited the study schools when they were in operational, and also members of the school board

and station pastors at their free times. Once meeting the participants, interviews were conducted and besides, observation was conducted in all the three schools.

### **3.12 Data analysis and presentation**

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), data analysis as a process of examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment and making deductions and inferences. In this study, data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of the two approaches allows a researcher to obtain more comprehensive data and compensates for limitations with use of a single approach (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The quantitative data was drawn from the closed-ended questionnaires and document analysis while the qualitative data was mainly obtained from the individual interviews, observation checklist and questionnaires particularly from the open-ended questions. The qualitative data collected was analysed using content analysis. The choice of content analysis was based on Kumar (2011) who noted that it is a useful method in qualitative research with the view to analysing the contents of interviews or observational notes. In order for the researcher to identify the main themes in the responses by the respondents using content analysis four steps were followed.

The first step was to identify the main themes. This step engaged in the descriptive responses from the participants in order to understand the meaning they communicated. The second step was to assign codes to the main themes by using numbers or keywords. The third step was to clarify responses from the participants under the main themes. After identifying the themes, there was sifting through the transcripts of all the interviews in order to classify responses from the participants. The fourth step was to integrate themes and responses into the text of the report (Kumar, 2011).

In dealing with quantitative data, data collected from the field was coded and entered into the computer for analysis using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) computer

software for windows programme to enable analysis. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistical tools where frequencies and percentages from the findings were presented in pie charts, tables and bar graphs which were used for interpretation. Statistical modelling was used to show relationship between dependent and independent variables. In this study, dependent variable was learner academic performance while independent variables were school culture factor, socioeconomic factor, and teaching/learning resources factor. In showing relationship, the statistical modelling using linear regression analysis was expressed in this equation:  $y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_nx_n$ , where  $y$  is learner academic performance,  $a$  is constant,  $b_1$  is a coefficient of the variable  $x_1$ ,  $b_2$  is a coefficient of the variable  $x_2$ ,  $b_3$  is a coefficient of the variable  $x_3$ ,  $x_1$  is school culture factor,  $x_2$  is socioeconomic factor,  $x_3$  is teaching/learning resources factor, and  $b_nx_n$ , is the coefficient of the  $n^{\text{th}}$  factor. Linear regression was used to determine significant factors in which 0.1 confidence level was preferred because the researcher could not wholly control the errors of the respondents in their responses. Any P value less than 0.1 was considered to be significant. Using the findings, conclusion was drawn about the significant factors that influence low learner academic performance in the specified Adventist schools in Malawi Adventist Union. The entire presentation and descriptions was done using Microsoft Word, figures, and tables.

### **3.14 Ethical consideration**

Before starting data collection, consent was sought from Mzuzu University, particularly the Dean of the Faculty of Education. The researcher also got permission from the SDA Education Department to go into the study schools to collect data. Further, the researcher first sought permission from people in-charge of the study sites and participants. Those selected for the study participated voluntarily and were free to terminate their participation any time they wanted and there was no coercion of whatever form. Maximum confidentiality was assured to

the respondents if they wanted it to be so. More on this, school identity card was shown to the respondents including the introductory letter from the University before engaging them in the study so that they should be assured that the study is of good intention.

### **3.15 Summary of the Chapter**

The chapter has shown the methodology in how data was collected from the three Adventist schools in the interaction with different respondents. The chapter has also shown the sample size, sampling procedures, instruments of data collection, data analysis, and ethical consideration.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

The focus of this chapter is to present the findings, analyse and interpret data based on the respondents on variables of the study entitled ‘**Factors Influencing Learner Academic Performance in the SDA Secondary Schools in Malawi**’.

These variables are in the category of school culture, socio-economic status, and teaching and learning resources factor. Data was gathered through interview, observation, documented records and two questionnaires; one for learners and the other one for the teachers. This chapter presents the findings of the study in accordance with the research questions which were as follow:

- i. What factors are significant in influencing learners` academic performance in the SDA secondary schools?
- ii. How do these factors influence learners` academic performance?
- iii. What are the implications of these factors on learners` academic performance?
- iv. What academic interventions can be put in place to enhance learners` academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi?

#### **4.1 Questionnaire return rate**

Questionnaire return rate is the proportion of the questionnaires returned after they had been issued to the respondents. As per sample design, a total of 42 respondents were used comprising 12 teachers and 30 students. A summary of the questionnaire return rate is shown in table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Questionnaire return rate**

Category of respondent sample	Sample	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)
Teachers	12	12	100
Learners	30	30	100

**Table 4.1** indicates that the response rate achieved for the two sets of questionnaires was 100% for both teachers and learners. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 60% is good and a response rate of 70% or more is even better for social research. Therefore, this return rate was considered adequate in providing valid and reliable presentation of the targeted population. This was attributed to the fact that the researcher administered the questionnaires personally.

#### **4.2 Demographic information of the respondents**

This presents the characteristics of personal attributes of individual respondent. These include their age, gender, religion, ethnicity and their form for the learners while for teachers it includes age, gender, religion, ethnicity, and highest academic achievement. The aim of including these attributes was to shed more light on factors influencing student's academic performance in SDA secondary schools.

##### **4.2.1 Denomination and ethnicity of teachers and learners**

The study found that in the SDA secondary schools most teachers and learners belong to the SDA church as 92% of the sampled teachers and 83% of sampled learners claimed to be members of SDA church. These schools accommodate individuals from different tribal groups as from the sampled participants it was found that there were 87% of learners who were of different ethnic groups than Chewa tribe. Similarly, 25% of teachers were of Chewa tribe and 75% representing different tribes in Malawi.

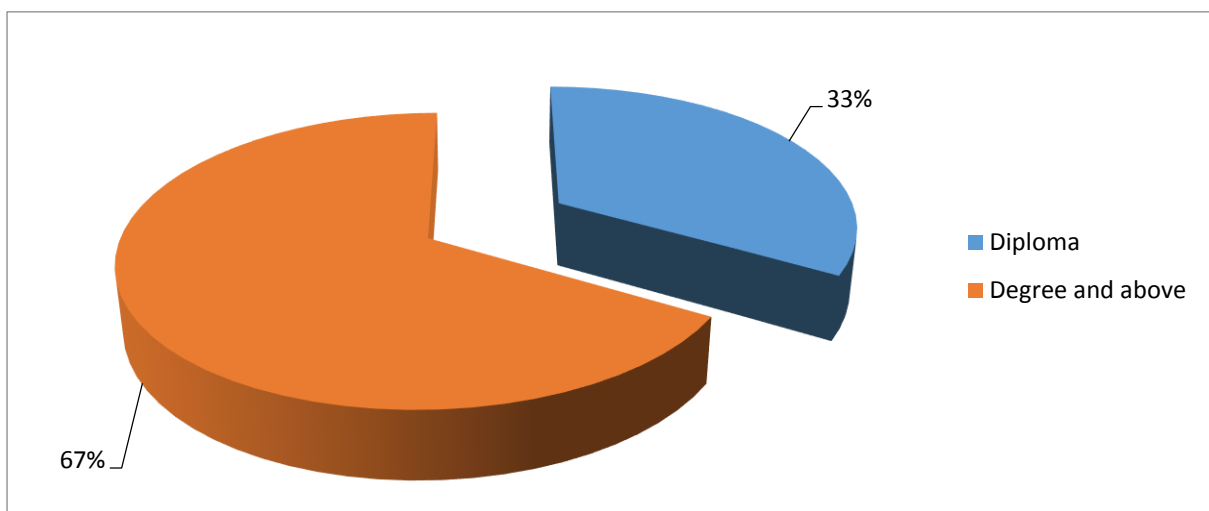


#### 4.2.2 Age of teachers and learners

Age of the teachers was important because it reflected on the age of the responding teachers. In order to establish the capability of teachers, the sample of teachers was required to give their age which was revealed that the average age of teachers was 50 years. The above information shows that most of the teachers are still energetic to deliver in classes. Age of the learners was important because it reflected on the years of schooling of the responding learners. In order to establish if the study was dealing with the correct age category, learners were required to give their age. The findings revealed that the average age of learners was 18 years. This age category was ideal as the study focused only on the form four learners in secondary schools who are usually between 17 and 19 years old.

#### 4.2.3 Teachers` Academic / Professional Qualifications

The teachers were requested to indicate their gender, religion, ethnicity and qualification. However, the target of this study was to know their qualifications in order to understanding on how their qualifications influence their performance and also the performance of the learners in the MSCE examinations. Figure 4.1 summarises various qualifications of the teachers in the sampled SDA secondary schools.



**Figure 4.1 Teachers` Academic / Professional Qualifications, 2019**

The findings revealed that 67% of the sampled teachers were degree holders or above while 33% were holders of Diploma. The above information shows that most of the teachers are academically and professionally qualified. The high number of qualified teachers indicates that there is quality content delivery which has the potential of positive influence on learners' performance in MSCE examinations. However, through interaction with the principals, it was noted that some teachers were holders of non-education degrees and they had no University Certificate of Education (UCE). For instance, in school XC there were 16 teachers in total, and only 11 were qualified while 5 teachers had bachelor degrees in other fields however they had no UCE.

#### 4.2.4 Gender of participants

The sample for this study was 54 participants in which 24 of the 54 participants were females and 30 of the 54 participants were males. The number of male participants was higher than of the female participants because the School administrators and Station pastors were all males.

**Table 4.2: Gender of the participants.**

Sex	Learners	Teachers	Station Pastors	Principals	Board Members
M	15	6	3	3	3
F	15	6	0	0	3

Through interview, it was revealed that in the two of the sampled schools there were only two lady teachers at each school. However, based on the **Table 4.2** above, it shows that there is gender insensitivity as all school administrators are males. Further to that, some of the participants stated that SDA schools in Malawi are under the Education Directors who happen all to be males. In the explanation by one of the study participants, gender insensitivity in terms of leadership exists because the positions of the Principal and Education Director are mainly

given to the Pastors, hence, males stand a chance as in the SDA church in Malawi there are no ordained female pastors. To some extent, this issue of gender insensitivity may affect the performance of the girls in these schools as they lack a good representation of role models.

### **4.3 Factors influencing learners` academic performance in the SDA secondary schools**

#### **4. 3.1 School culture factors influencing learners` academic performance**

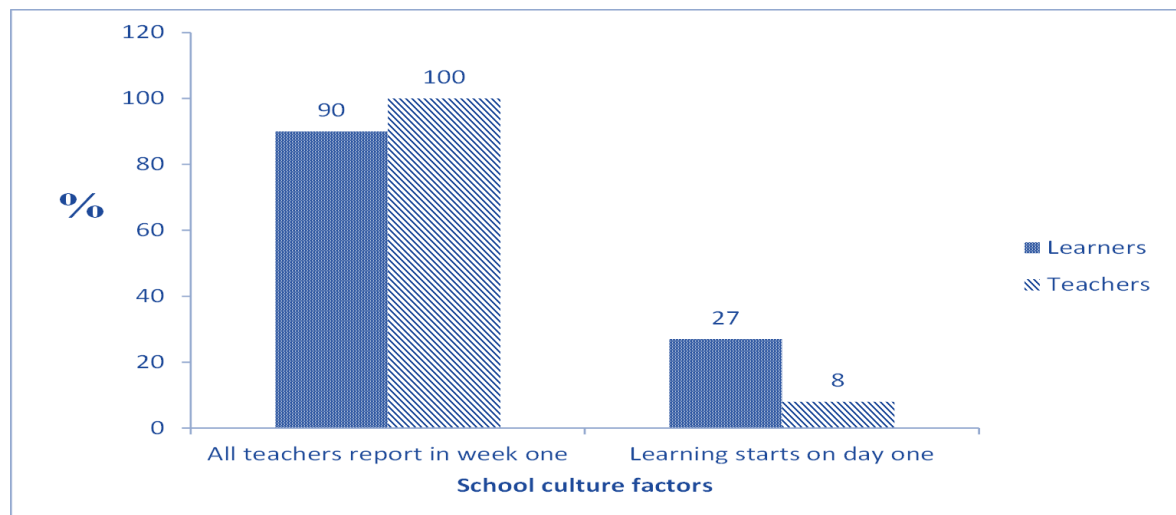
As defined by Van Houtte (2005) school culture refers to a number of practices in school which have strong impact on the academic performance of learners. In the view of Stolp and Smith, school culture is defined as the historically transmitted pattern of meanings that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, traditions and myths understood, may be in varying degrees by members of the school community. Therefore, this study aimed at understanding some of the practices or pattern of meanings that exist in SDA secondary schools in Malawi whether they were significantly influencing the academic performance of learners in these schools. This prompted the researcher to explore more about some school practices that exist in the SDA school like; commencement of learning, quality school administration by the directors, inspection and supervision, discipline of learners and application of rules, learners` attitudes towards education, system of enrolling learners, existence of PTA, language used for communication, and overstaying of teachers on how they influence the learners` academic performance. Table 4.3 below presents some of these factors and also shows factors which significantly influence academic performance in the SDA secondary schools.

**Table 4.3: Variables in the equation for school culture factors.**

variables in the equation	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
All teachers report in week one	22.160	19934.843	0.000	1	0.999	4205809708.297
All teachers punctual	-1.686	1.329	1.610	1	0.205	0.185
All teachers give CA frequently	1.048	1.656	0.401	1	0.527	2.853
Other students come without aptitude test	-2.559	1.223	4.381	1	0.036	0.077
Learning starts not on day one	4.539	1.720	6.964	1	0.008	93.624
Discipline observed by all learners	2.286	1.242	3.387	1	0.066	9.834
Church activities done frequently	1.123	1.525	0.542	1	0.462	3.073
Constant	-28.379	19934.843	0.000	1	0.999	0.000

**Week one lessons and learners` academic performance**

Teachers and learners were asked to indicate whether all teachers in the sampled SDA school report for work in week one and also whether learning starts on day one. The findings are revealed in the figure 4.2 below.



**Figure 4.2: Week one lessons perceived by teachers and learners, 2019**

In all sampled schools, it was revealed that almost all teachers report in week one as 100% of teachers and 90% of learners remarked that. Though both learners and teachers could report in

week one, only 8% of teachers and 27% of learners remarked that learning starts on day one. Through separate interviews with all the principals in the sampled schools they agreed with the sentiments by the majority of teachers and learners that learning does not start on day one. According to these principals, day one is set aside for registration in terms of knowing who has come and how much fees has been paid by each learner. One of the mission pastors based on his experience and observation agreed that day one is spared for registration, however, he further pointed out that in week one there is no much seriousness in learning. In agreement with this pastor, the mission pastor at school XC said;

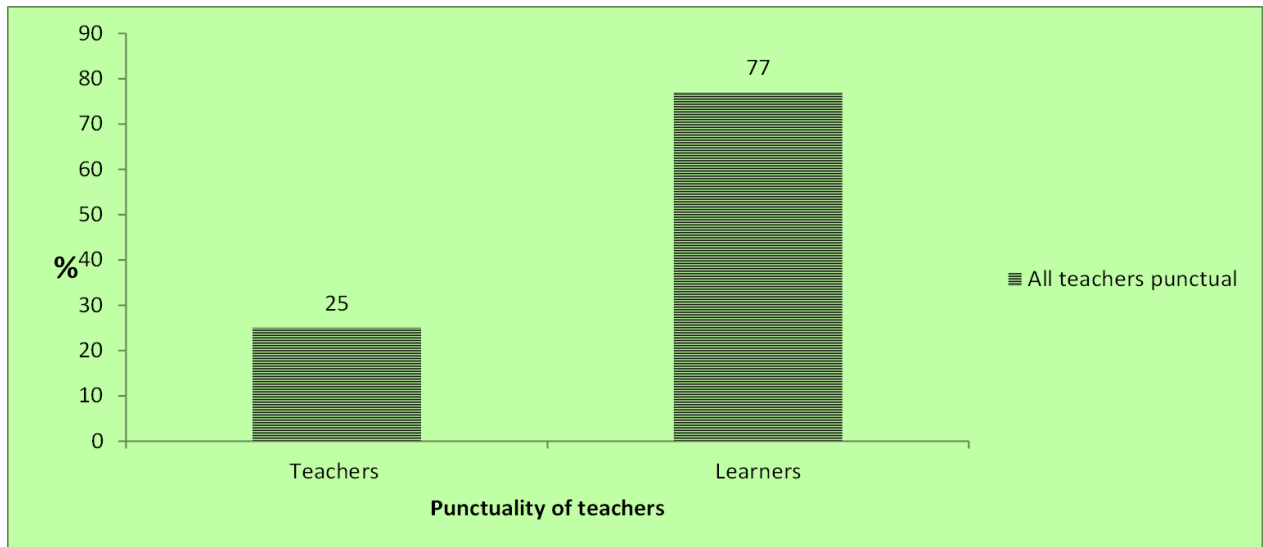
*“Not only is day one affected. Sometimes administrators are too busy to deal with all learners on day one as such registration work is spilled to day two. Much as both learners and teachers know that day one and even day two there is almost no learning, psychologically there learning mood in that week is put off”.*

This laxity is likely to make teachers not to cover the syllabus in good time to pave way for revision which its impact would be reflected in learners` performance in the MSCE examinations. Further, based on the information presented in the tables 4.3 above, it is clearly shown that lack of serious learning in week one is one of the significant factors influencing academic performance of learners in these schools.

### **Punctuality and Learners` academic performance**

One of the school managers` roles is to ensure proper and professional supervision of both teachers and students. Principals, deputies and heads of departments are greatly responsible for quality curriculum implementation in their schools. They are therefore supposed to ensure that teachers attend their lessons punctually and professionally. In teaching, every minute is very important and need to be utilised by the educators since time lost is never recovered. Therefore, teachers and learners were asked to indicate whether teachers were punctual when coming for lessons. The rationale of this research question was based on the fact that time is always

precious as it is not possible to regain the lost time. The findings are presented in the **Figure 4.3** below showing teachers' and learners' responses as to whether teachers attend to their lessons punctually.



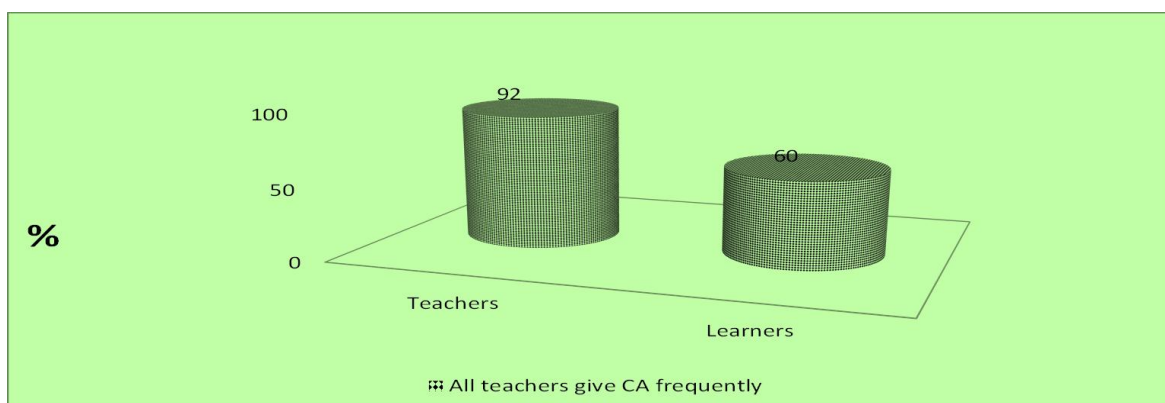
**Figure 4.3: Perception of respondents on teachers` punctuality**

In contrast to the study done by Likando (2017) which found that absenteeism of both teachers and learners contributed to poor academic performance among female secondary school pupils of Lusaka District in Zambia, this study through oral interviews with the administrators found that the issue of absenteeism in the SDA secondary school did not exist. However, the study basing on teachers` responses revealed that management of time by teachers in SDA secondary schools is a problem as 75% of teachers claimed that punctuality was problematic. Much as 77% of learners remarked that teachers report for lessons on time, teachers themselves openly showed that there was time management problem. Therefore, the general consensus from the sampled teachers that time management was a problem entails that punctuality would negatively influence the performance of the learners in the SDA secondary schools. According to the Effective Schools Model, Lezotte (2010) emphasises on opportunity to learn/time on task if the school is to become effective. This means that both teachers and learners must be

time bound to the programmes scheduled. As such, if teachers are not conscious with time learning is likely to be incomplete as other tasks may not be tackled or in other words, the trend of lateness encourages time wastage and inadequate syllabi coverage, both which negatively affect the performance of learners. These findings concur with earlier findings of a study conducted by Chileya (2016) on factors affecting poor academic performance of pupils in Junior Secondary Leaving Examinations in selected day secondary schools in Mwense district, Luapula province (Zambia). The focus of his research in pupils' performance in Junior Secondary Leaving Examinations found that late reporting for lessons by both teachers and pupils was one of the factors leading to poor academic performance. Much as punctuality influences the academic performance of learners in SDA schools, but according to the statistical findings based on the information given in **Table 4.3** it is not a significant factor that influences the academic performance of learners.

#### **Continuous Assessment and learners' academic performance**

The study also wanted to learn more about the issue of Continuous Assessment (CA) as of the current curriculum stresses much on that. As such, teachers and learners were requested to comment on the issue of CA whether were being administered frequently in their schools. The findings are presented in figure 4.4 below.



**Figure 4.4: Perception of respondents on CA if administered frequently**

Based on data collected, though 40% of learners claimed that teachers were not administering CA frequently, however, it was noted that 60% of learners and 92% of teachers strongly stated that almost all teachers were giving CA frequently to learners in each and every term. The principal of school XC in the oral interview proudly and confidently said that:

*“Our school has enough reams of papers for all teachers who are ready to give tests to the learners”.*

In his remarks, he also commended his teachers for the habit of administering CA frequently. Therefore, according to the statistical findings presented in **Table 4.3**, the issue of CA is not one of the significant factors influencing academic performance of learners in these schools in the negative way.

#### **Admission of learners and learners` academic performance**

The researcher was also much interested to know more about how learners get enrolled in the SDA secondary schools. This research question was considered on the assumption that the systems of enrolling learners have a great impact on learners` performance. Therefore, teachers and learners were requested to indicate if all learners were admitted through passing aptitude test. Their responses are shown in **Table 4.4** below.

**Table 4.4: Admission of learners through aptitude tests**

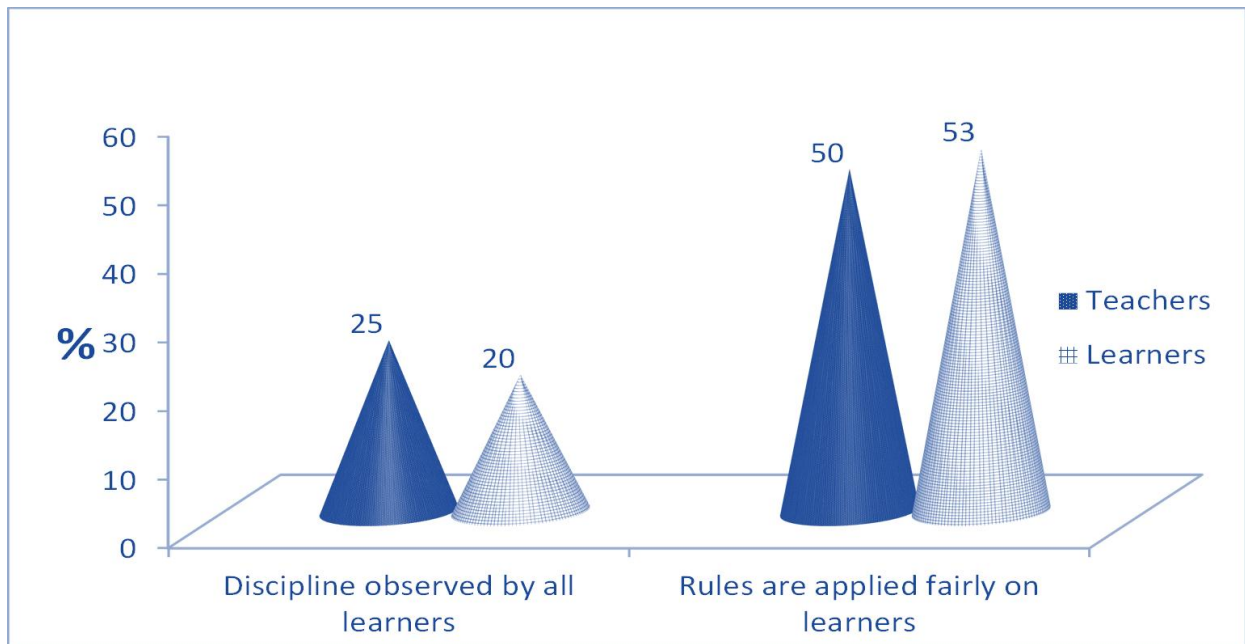
Variable	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Not all learners come through aptitude test		
Learners Yes	25	83
No	5	17
Teachers Yes	10	83
No	2	17



From the findings summarized in **Table 4.4** regarding the admission of learners in SDA secondary schools, in the claim of 2 teachers and 5 learners all learners secure places in SDA secondary schools through passing the aptitude test administered by the education department of the SDA church. However, 10 teachers and 25 learners claimed that there were some learners who were in these schools without going through aptitude test. In shedding more light on this matter, the principals agreed that indeed almost all learners come after passing the aptitude test. However, they further said that in some instances where they want to fill out some spaces especially in forms two, three and four, learners who have applied for a place do not sit for the aptitude test rather are told to produce a transcript from their recent past school. Much as aptitude test is administered every year, a good number of teachers faulted the quality of the aptitude test administered. Based on the data presented in **Table 4.3**, an issue of admission of learners in line with aptitude test is one of the significant factors that negatively influence learner academic performance in the Malawi SDA secondary schools.

#### **Discipline and application of school rules in regard to learners` academic performance**

The study also aimed at learning more about discipline and application of school rules in the mission schools since they are greatly connected with academic performance. The rationale of this research question was based on the assumption that indiscipline causes poor performance because when unrest occurs in a school, teaching and learning process is affected in many ways. The researcher requested the respondents to indicate whether discipline was observed by all learners and also if school rules were applied on all learners fairly. **Figure 4.5** shows a summary of the findings from both teachers and learners.



**Figure 4.5: Discipline and application of school rules**

It was noted that 75% of teachers and 80% of learners had the observation that discipline was not being observed by all learners. In agreement with these teachers and students, all board members alluded to that discipline was a challenge in the SDA schools. As discipline is a challenge in SDA secondary schools, it was also revealed that school rules were not applied to all learners fairly. According to 50% of sampled teachers and 53% of sampled learners remarked that school rules were applied to all learners fairly while 50% of sampled teachers and 47% of sampled learners claimed that school rules were not applied to all learners fairly. Therefore, based on the above findings, it can easily be noted that indiscipline cases could have had a crucial bearing in the learners` performance in SDA secondary school in Malawi. In conjunction with the findings presented in the **Figure 4.5**, **Table 4.3** presents discipline as the significant factor that influences the performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi.

### Church activities and Learners` academic performance

The researcher wanted to establish whether there was frequent participation of learners in church activities as the study schools are owned by the church. **Table 4.5** shows learners and teachers` responses to the question whether learners participate in church activities frequently.

**Table 4.5: Learners` and teachers` views on frequent participation in church activities**

Variable	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)
Church activities done frequently		
Teachers Yes	10	83
No	2	17
Learners Yes	27	90
No	3	10

It was found that according to 10 teachers and 27 learners in the sampled schools, church activities were done frequently. In a separate interview with one of the principals, he concurred with the sentiments of teachers and learners that church activities were done frequently. However, he was quick to confirm that activities are well planned, and timely managed. In all interviews with the principals, mission pastors and school board members, the issue of church activities being done frequently was not considered as something posing challenge to the academic performance of learners in these schools. The interviewees alluded to frequently church activities which were well and timely conducted that were instrumental to the behavioural change as many learners in the SDA schools were rejects from others schools because of indiscipline. According to the statistical findings presented in the **Table 4.3**, it is evident that frequent participation in church activities is not a significant factor that influences the academic performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools.

### 4.3.2 Socio-economic factors influencing learners` academic performance

This study in trying to establish the significant factors influencing the academic performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools it looked at socio-economic factors in two folds. The first part looked at socio-economic stand of the parents or guardians in relation with their wards in terms of education level, financial status, support to their wards inform of resources and monetary, and consultation with teachers. The second part the focus was given to the teachers as the researcher wanted to establish their perceptions on accommodation, salary and the issue of incentives both to them and learners. Details about statistical presentation concerning the depiction of the socio-economic factors whether they significantly influence the performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools is presented in **Tables 4.6** and **4.7** below.

**Table 4.6: Variables in the equation for socio-economic perceived by teachers**

Variables in the Equation	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
All teachers accomodated in school	-39.352	25281.688	0.000	1	0.999	0.000
Teachers comfortable with salary	-39.514	26087.668	0.000	1	0.999	0.000
Best performers (students) receive incentives	0.971	22710.772	0.000	1	1.000	2.642
Trs receive incentives after MSCE results	20.597	18768.432	0.000	1	0.999	881627147.046
Constant	75.935	76781.080	0.000	1	0.999	9.500

**Table 4.7: Variables in the equation for socio-economic perceived by learners**

<b>variables in the equation</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Education level of learners` guardian	19.514	28357.252	0.000	1	0.999	298338572.935
Income of learners` guardian	0.278	0.836	0.110	1	0.740	1.320
Guardians provide learning resources required to their wards	0.337	1.519	0.049	1	0.824	1.401
Parents discussing Lernasers` academic performance with Trs	-0.029	1.073	0.001	1	0.978	0.971
Pocket money received in a term	1.845	0.937	3.877	1	0.049	6.331
Constant	-43.326	56714.505	0.000	1	0.999	0.000

**Accommodation and salaries of teachers**

The researcher in trying to establish more about the socio-economic factors influencing learners` performance, the emphasis was firstly put on the accommodation and salaries of teachers in all the sampled SDA secondary schools. The rationale of these research questions was based on the assumption that when teachers are not motivated in any way, be it salary, personal life, or recognition they would engage in other businesses, meaning time devoted to teaching becomes inadequate. As such, learners may not even find them for consultation when they have difficulties. In the study done by Arain, Jafri, Ramzan, and Ali (2014) on the impact of teacher wages on students' achievement, it revealed that there is a great impact of teacher remuneration on students' performance. As SES touches teacher remuneration, in long run the morale of a teacher becomes affected too. This means that if the teacher`s SES is high, the morale also becomes high which leads teachers in doing extra work to achieve high academic performance in learners. In contrast, low teacher`s SES causes low morale and makes a teacher to lose interest in doing the extra work which eventually affects learners` academic performance in a negative way. The sampled teachers were asked to indicate if all teachers were accommodated on the school campus and whether teachers who were given

accommodation by the school were comfortable with that accommodation. Further to that, they were also required to point out the category of their salary and whether they were comfortable with the salary they were being paid. Details about teachers' responses on the issues of accommodation and salaries are presented in **Table 4.8** below.

**Table 4.8: Teachers' accommodation and salaries.**

Variable	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)
<b>All teachers accommodated in school</b>		
Yes	8	67
No	4	33
<b>All teachers comfortable with accommodation</b>		
Yes	11	92
No	1	8
<b>Income of respondent</b>		
MK 0 - 100,000.00	3	25
MK 101,000.00 and above	9	75
<b>Teachers comfortable with salary</b>		
Yes	3	25
No	9	75

The findings indicated that 67% of teachers were accommodated within the school premises while 33% had no houses within the school campus. It was also noted that 92% of teachers accommodated in institutional houses were comfortable with the accommodation they were offered. Referring to their salaries, 75% of teachers showed dissatisfaction with what they were being paid as such, this would be one of the factors influence low academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi. The researchers suggests this because in reference to the study by Maguswi (2011) which looked at views presented by school administrators on failure rates and measures they would put in place to improve school academic performance revealed that poor performance in physics was caused by low teacher morale among many factors. The findings of Maguswi (2011) imply that subject teachers having no morale because of socio-economic factors they would not manage to finish the subject syllabi on time hence

contributing to poor academic performance among learners. As such, his findings also agree with Devine and Cohen (2007) who argue that schools should promote social, economic, emotional, intellectual and physical safety of teachers for good performance in learners to be enhanced. However, based on the data given above in **Table 4.6**, lack of accommodation and poor salaries are statistically shown not to be significant socio-economic factors that negatively influence learner academic performance in the Malawi SDA secondary schools.

### **Incentives and performance**

Schools that promote excellence instil through their administrators the value of appreciating good performance among teachers and learners. Therefore, the researcher wanted to establish if the culture of giving incentives to teachers and learners as a token of appreciation or recognition was in existence in the SDA secondary schools. Therefore, teachers were asked to indicate whether the best performers in academic circles were rewarded. More information about their responses is revealed in **Table 4.9** below.

**Table 4.9: provision of incentives**

Variable	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)
Best performing learners receive incentives termly		
Yes	5	42
No	7	58
Best performing teachers receive incentives after MSCE results		
Yes	9	75
No	3	25

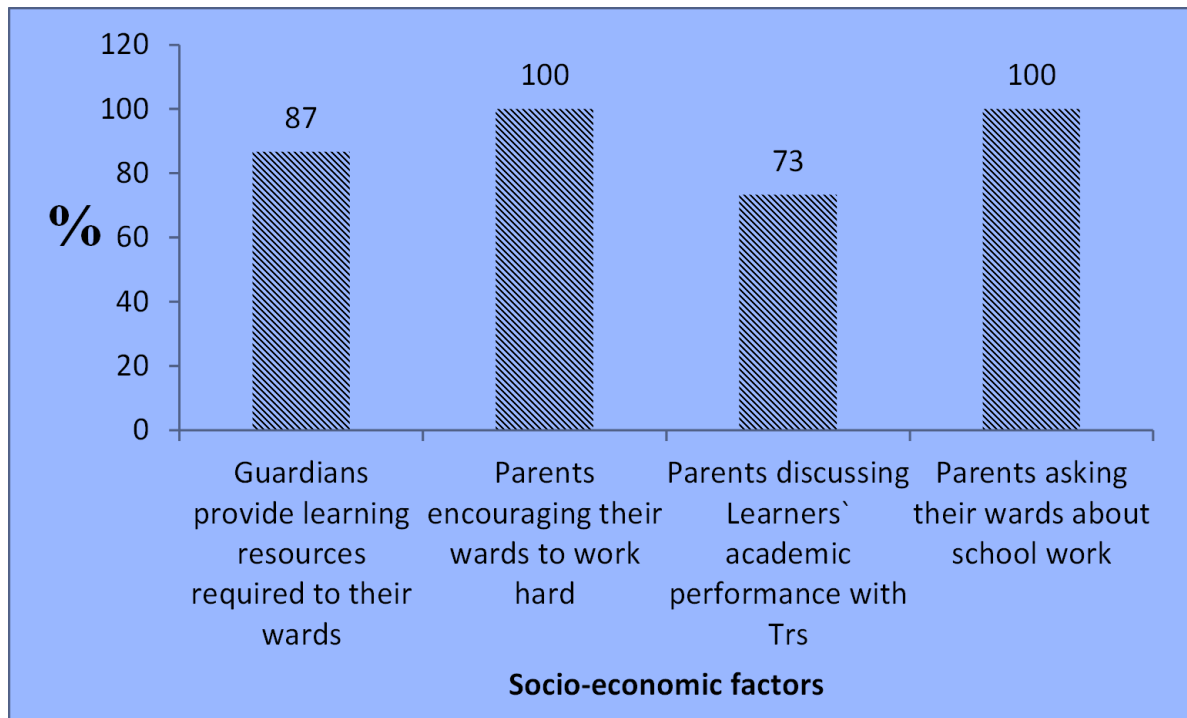
The findings show that teachers are given incentives as 75% of teachers alluded to that teachers receive incentives for the best performance registered in their subjects when MSCE results are

released. The study also revealed that the issue of incentives to the part of learners was not much common as only few teachers representing 42% indicated that the culture of rewarding learners for their good performance was being done. This signalled that lack of incentives to learners in Malawi SDA schools would play a role in influencing learners` performance as the study by Chileya (2016) in selected day secondary schools in Mwense district, Luapula province found that poor academic performance was caused by lack of teacher/pupil motivation in schools among other factors. Similarly, the findings of the study done Kaimenyi (2013) in Imenti north district, Kenya revealed that there was poor academic performance in Imenti North District because of lack of the spirit of motivating learners, among other factors. Meanwhile, according to findings presented in **Table 4.6** the issue of incentives to the part of learners was statistically depicted as not a significant factor that influences learners` performance in the SDA secondary schools.

#### **Parental concern on education**

The study also aimed at establishing socio-economic factors that influence learners` academic performance in the mission schools of SDA church. This motive propelled the researcher to ask learners to indicate whether their parents or guardians were taking initiatives in terms of providing them with required learning resources, encouraging them to work hard, discussing their academic performance with their teachers, and asking them about school work. Responses given by the participants are presented in **Figure 4.6** below.





**Figure 4.6: Parental concern on education as perceived by learners.**

It was noted that learners in the SDA secondary schools had guardians who had a great passion on education. Based on the data in **Figure 4.6** above, guardians about 87% try their level best to provide learners with required academic learning resources, 100% encourage their wards to work hard, 73% also take initiative to discuss their wards' performance with their teachers, and beyond that 100% ask their wards about school work. This clearly shows that these elements of socio-economic factors affect the performance of learners in positive manner as Jelfer and Lupart (2001) state that involvement of parents improves the students' cognitive and social skills which help them to succeed in their academic life. Similarly, the findings presented in **Table 4.7** indicate that parental concern on education in general is not a significant factor that influences learners' academic performance in a negative way.

#### **Academic and financial status of the learners' guardians**

The researcher asked learners to indicate the category of their guardians in term of education level and financial status. The findings based on their responses are presented in **Table 4.10** below.

**Table 4.10: Academic and financial status of the learners` guardians**

Variable	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)
Income of learners` guardians		
MK 0 - 900.00	1	3
MK 1.000.00 - 100,000.00	10	33
MK101,000.00 and above	19	63
education level of learners` guardian		
Primary	2	7
Secondary and above	28	93

From the findings, the study noticed that a good number of learners had guardians who were educated and economically capable to support them academically. It is in evidence as many learners (93%) indicated that their parents had gone beyond primary education and also 63% showed that their parents had at least good income. So based on the above findings, it can easily be noted that the parental level of education and financial status could work to the students' advantage in many ways. For instance, parents would have a great interest in monitoring the academic progress of their children in school, it could also be a source to helping and inspiring the children to acquire positive aspirations, self-esteem and self-actualization in life that might eventually be reflected in MSCE examination results. Therefore, as information presented in **Table 4.7** above, these elements of socio-economic factors are not significant factors contributing to low academic performance in the SDA secondary schools.

#### **Pocket money received and learners` academic performance**

The researchers wanted to find out whether learners were given enough pocket money by their guardians. As such, learners were asked to indicate the category of their pocket money received in a term. The responses of learners are presented in **Table 4.11** below.

**Table 4.21: Pocket money received by learners in a term**

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Category	Frequency (n)	Valid Percent (%)
MK 0 - 20,000.00	21	70
MK 21,000.00 and above	9	30

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Based on **Table 4.11** above, 21 of the sampled learners indicated that they were receiving MK 20,000.00 and below as their pocket money in a term. Meanwhile, 9 of the sampled learners indicated that their pocket money per term was MK 21,000.00 and above. According to the statistical presentation in **Table 4.7** above, pocket money received by learners in a term is depicted as a significant factor influencing academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi.

#### **4.3.3 Teaching and Learning resources influencing learners` academic performance**

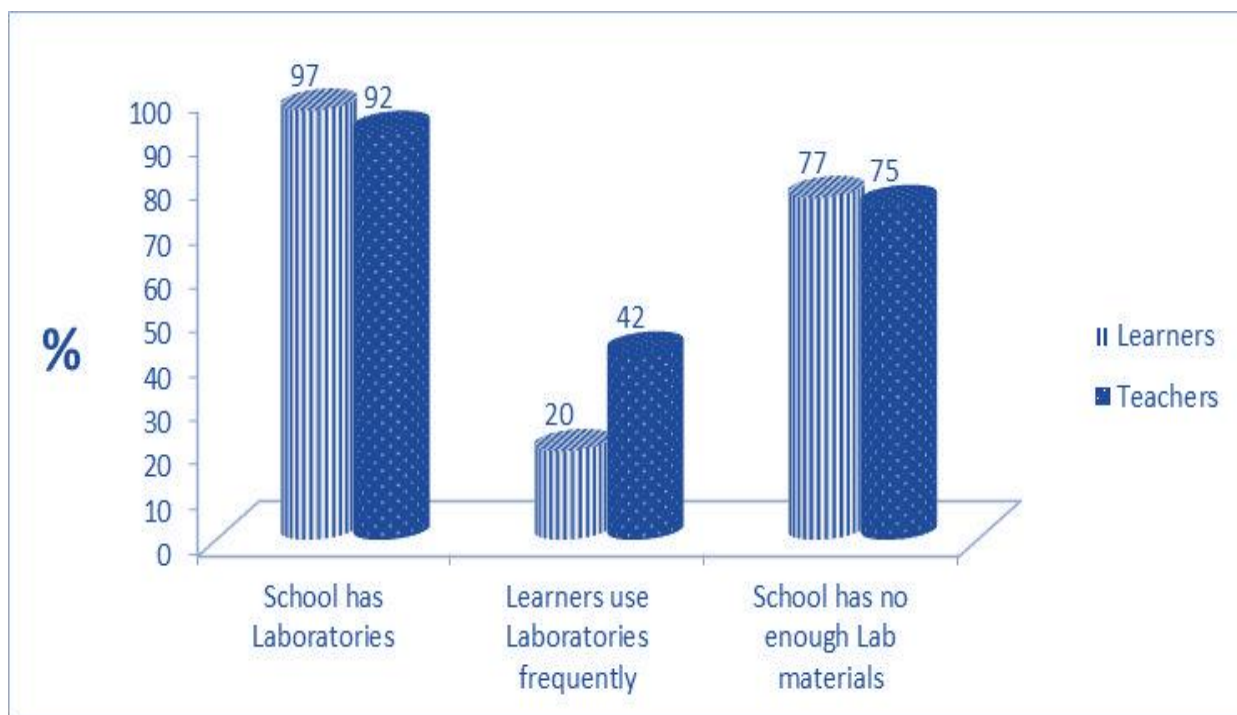
In education the availability of teaching and learning facilities and resources are very vital as the provision of quality of education is concerned. These are supposed to be available, abundance and in good condition. The study had interest in teaching and learning materials as Eshiwani (1983) found a significant relationship between the availability of teaching and learning resources and academic performance achievement. With this in mind, the researcher intended to establish whether availability of teaching and learning resources in the schools was a significant factor influencing the performance of learners. As such teachers and learners were asked to indicate the availability, frequent use of facilities, and adequacy of teaching and learning materials in their respective schools. Meanwhile, the rationale of the question was based on assumption that, teaching and learning materials could assist in making subjects less abstract.

### Science laboratories and materials

Teachers and learners were asked to indicate the availability of school laboratories, use of laboratories and adequacy of laboratory materials. This was done with notion that availability of good school laboratories provide good environment for teaching and learning process of science subjects where necessary practical and experiments are done. The responses from the respondents are presented in the **Figure 4.7** below. However, **Table 4.12** assists to indicate which factors are significant in relation to elements of laboratories and materials in terms of influencing the academic performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools

**Table 4.12: Variables in the equation concerning laboratories**

variables in the equation	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
School has Laboratories	21.039	25635.036	0.000	1	0.999	1370837709.787
Learners use Laboratories frequently	0.735	1.174	0.392	1	0.531	2.085
School hasn't enough Lab materials	3.273	1.392	5.529	1	0.019	26.381
Constant	-26.440	25635.037	0.000	1	0.999	0.000



**Figure 4.7: Science laboratories and materials**

From **Figure 4.7**, it is well indicated that all sampled schools have laboratories. The findings revealed that 97% of learners indicated that all sampled schools had laboratories. It was also noted that 92% of teachers were in agreement with the learners` ideas that teaching and learning facilities particularly laboratories were available. The findings further revealed that 20% of learners indicated that in the SDA schools learners had a well access to the laboratories. On the other side, only 42% of teachers indicated that learners had a frequent access to the laboratories. The study also revealed that there were inadequate of teaching and learning materials in terms of laboratory materials in the SDA secondary schools as the large percentage of learners (77%) indicated that. Besides that, 75% of the teachers concurred with the learners` ideas that teaching and learning materials mainly laboratory equipment were inadequate. This scenario may have arisen due to tight budgets, large classes or ignorance on the part of school managers on the role of teaching and learning materials in improving performance in learners. In reference to **Table 4.12** above, it is indicated that the availability of laboratories and their frequent use by

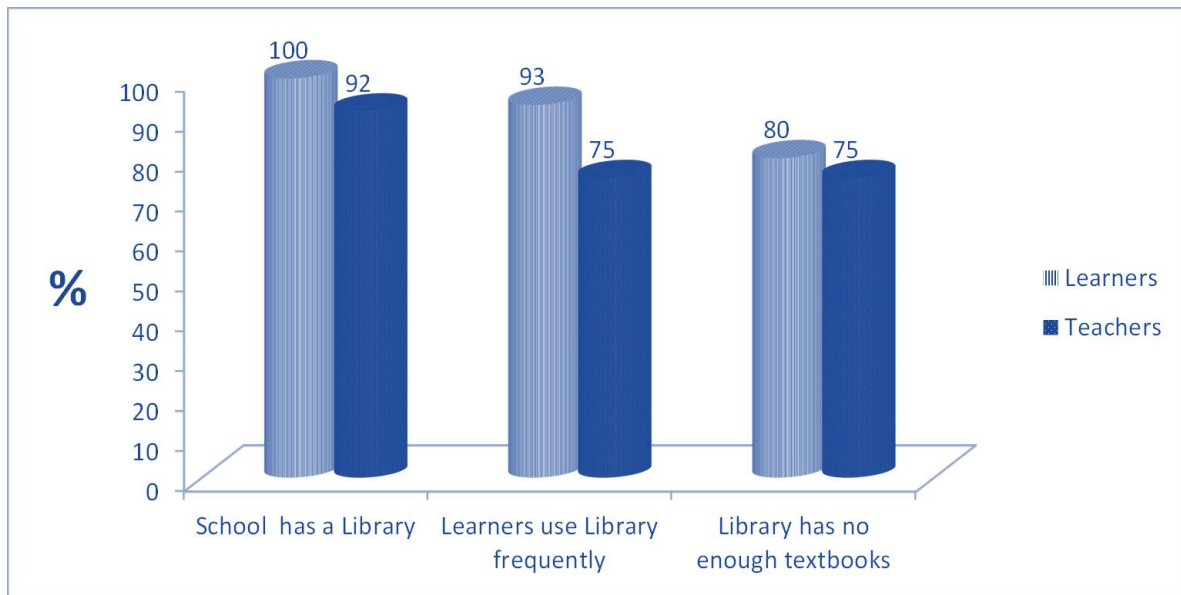
learners are not significant factors influencing the learner`s academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi. On the other part, the net result of inadequate of teaching and learning materials in terms of laboratory materials is that it was noted to be the significant factor influencing the decline in learners` academic performance in the MSCE examinations, in the SDA schools.

### **Library and textbooks**

Teachers and learners were asked to indicate the availability of school library, use of library and adequacy of textbooks in the library. This was done with the assumption that availability of a good school library provides a good environment for studying and interaction with different books. Therefore, **Table 4.13** shows whether the elements of library and textbooks significantly influence the academic performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi. However, the responses from the respondents are presented in **Figure 4.8** below.

**Table 4.13: Variables in the equation concerning library**

<b>variables in the equation</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
School has a Library	19.840	40192.962	0.000	1	1.000	413308391.011
Learners use Library frequently	-0.848	1.397	0.368	1	0.544	0.428
Library hasn't enough textbooks	2.726	1.231	4.903	1	0.027	15.277
Constant	-22.233	40192.962	0.000	1	1.000	0.000



**Figure 4.8: Library and textbooks**

From **Figure 4.8**, it is clear that all sampled schools had teaching and learning facilities like library as the high percentage of learners (100%) indicated that all sampled schools had libraries. It was also noted that 92% of teachers concurred with the learners` sentiments that teaching and learning facilities particularly library were available. The findings revealed that 93% of learners and 75% of teachers indicated that in the SDA schools learners had a well access to the library. However, the large percentage of learners thus 80% indicated that there was inadequate of teaching and learning materials in terms of textbooks materials in the SDA secondary schools. In additional to that, 75% of the teachers concurred with the learners` idea that teaching and learning materials were inadequate. Similarly, this scenario may have arisen due to tight budgets, large classes or ignorance on the part of school managers on the role of teaching and learning materials in improving performance in learners. Therefore, the clear result of inadequacy of teaching and learning materials in terms of textbooks was noted to be a significant factor influencing the low learners` academic performance in the MSCE examinations, in the SDA schools. Meanwhile, in connection with the findings presented in **Table 4.13** above, it is indicated that the issue concerning the availability of library and

frequent use of library were not significant factors influencing the learner`s academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi.

#### **4.4 How do these factors influence learners` academic performance?**

Through document analysis, observation, administration of the questionnaires and oral interviews, it was found that there are many factors influencing learners` academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi. It was observed that the exposed factors influenced learners` academic performance in different ways however almost all of them were leading to one major consequence that is low academic performance in the MSCE examinations.

##### **4.4.1 Teachers` views**

The researcher wanted to learn more from teachers on how different factors presented by them influence the academic performance of learners in their respective schools. In response, teachers stated a number of ways and one of such was concerned with lack of incentives to the best performing learners. According to 50% of teachers, learners were not motivated to work harder by the administration as the administration could not reward learners` good performance. Teachers further tackled the issue of the crop of learners they had in their schools as one of the major factors contributing to low academic performance in the mission schools. The respondents faulted system of admitting learners as they said that the administration of the aptitude test had no meaning because most learners selected could not fit the secondary school stuff. According to some of the sampled teachers, most learners in these SDA schools lacked seriousness which made them fail to prepare for national examinations. One teacher from school XA with a concerned heart stated that, most learners were fond of absconding classes, not doing assignments or hand them over, and inattention in class. According to him, all these were generated from the poor system of admitting learners hence no matter how teachers could work hard good performance remains difficult to be achieved by the learners. In reference to teachers` punctuality as it has also been presented in **Figure 4.3**, most teachers stated that lack



of punctuality on the part of many teachers had a great influence on learners` academic performance. It was revealed at the end of the academic year teachers would not have completed the work in the syllabus meant to be covered in that year. This would result learners not to do well in the national examinations as they could approach examinations without covering the whole syllabus.

#### **4.4.2 Learners` views**

The researcher also confronted learners to outline how the factors they mentioned could influence their academic performance in the MSCE examinations. In reference to the teaching and learning materials as have also been presented in the figures 4.9, most learners stated that they had no enough time to interact with textbooks as they are few. In her explanation, one learner from school XA had this to say:

*“Not all the times we get information from the teachers. It is our duty too as students to go and search for our own but most of the times we go to the library we find that some of the students have already borrowed the books”.*

In relation with the sentiment by a learner from school XA, another learner from school XC also uttered this:

*“Due to shortage of books, we are not able to study for example, if we have been given a passage to study at the Library, we go there and find that the textbooks for that subject are finished, they have been given to other students”.*

Most learners also talked about laboratory materials and one learner from school XB claimed that:

*“Inadequacy of lab materials make other experiments not to be done hence students lack knowledge about such topics”.*

In conjunction with this learner, a learner from school XA lamented about shortage of laboratory materials in these words:

*“Some lessons need to be practically learned but due to lack of some laboratory materials we fail to do them”.*

#### **4.4. 3 Board members` views**

The researchers probed more from the members of the school board on how the factors they raised were influencing the learners` academic performance in the sampled SDA secondary schools. In their views, most board members highlighted on the issues of non-existence of the PTA and overstaying of teachers. In their sentiments, lack of PTA limited the constructive criticisms from parents who also happened to be the stakeholders of the school. A certain board member echoed that with such lack of contributions from parents it was one of the reasons behind many indiscipline cases in the SDA schools. Additionally, some of the board members also uttered that overstaying of teachers at one duty station affected learners` academic performance in the sense that teachers tended to be preoccupied with local community issues in the areas they were staying hence they could become laxity on teaching. Negligence by teachers would result learners to fail to attempt national examinations with full confidence. This could happen due to failure of teachers to cover the whole syllabus.

#### **4.4. 4 Principals` and Mission pastors` views**

The researcher also contacted the mission pastors and principals in all the sampled schools. These pastors and principals hinted on the influence of many factors similarly to what other teachers and learners had put it. However, it was also learnt from some of the pastors and principals that lack of activeness by the Directorate of Youth and Education in the Conferences and Union particularly in academic issues was posing a big hindrance on the achievement of high academic performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools. It was revealed that most Directors of Youth and Education were failing to provide constructive guidance in the running of these schools as most of them did not have teaching background. It was also revealed

that the belief in the SDA schools of educating a human being as a whole, thus educating someone in all aspects of life in terms of spiritual, mental, social and physical was affecting the performance to some extent. It was echoed by some of the principals and mission pastors that such principle was promoting leniency in decision making when tackling disciplinary cases which later would compromise the education standards and eventually affect the academic performance of learners.

#### **4.5 What are the implications of these factors on learners` academic performance?**

The study wanted to understand the implications of the established factors that were influencing learners` academic performance. The study revealed that the established factors that were influencing learners` academic performance had several implications and one of such was low pass rate. It was stated that SDA schools as private institutions could not be at par in terms of pass rate with other well performing private schools owned by individuals and churches. Beside pass rate, the established factors that were influencing learners` academic performance could also result into few learners going for further studies in the public universities. It was revealed that this was a case because SDA secondary schools were producing few learners who could be within the selectable range thus learners with six (6) credits and the aggregate points of thirty six (36) points and below.

#### **4.6 What academic interventions can be put in place to enhance learners` academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi?**

Through administration of the open ended questionnaires and oral interviews, it was found that there are many strategies if implemented learners` academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi can be enhanced. To begin with, in their sentiments 78% of teachers and 65% of board members argued that there was need for principals and teachers to intensify the use of English language as a medium of communication among learners all the

times. They lamented that frequent use of local languages was negatively affecting learners academically.

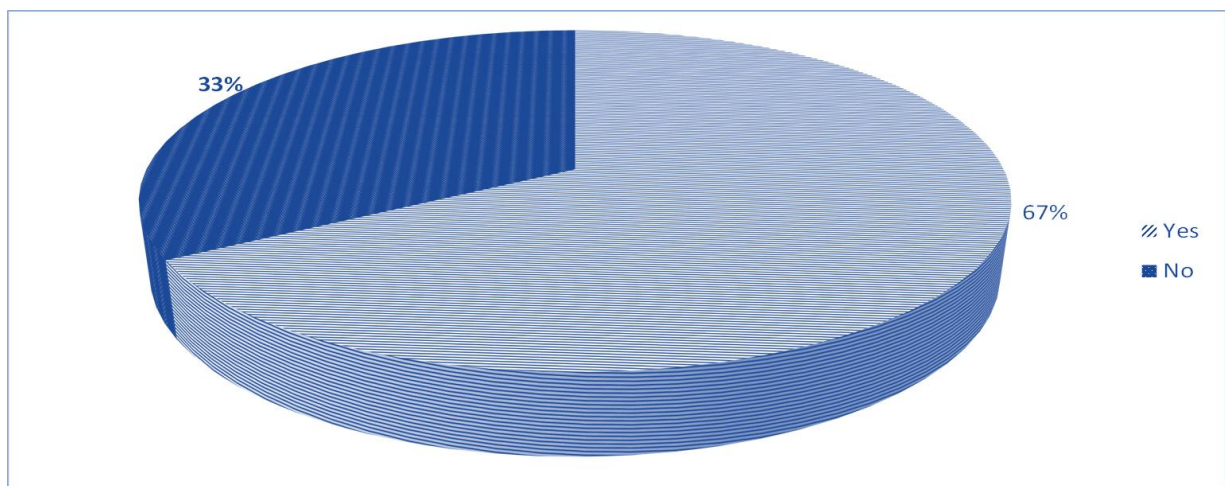
Besides, the 88% of the teachers involved in the study further insisted that there should be the formation of the PTA. In their argument, this would stimulate parents to have more interest in their children's` education as learners can perform better academically with parents` involvement.

In addition to that, just as teachers and students pointed out, all the three school principals were agreeable that teaching and learning resources were in adequate hence hampering the performance of learners. Therefore, most participants in this study recommended that the SDA education department in conjunction with the principals should ensure adequate supply of teaching and learning resources in the library and laboratories. Principals should also ensure that enough teaching resources are made available to teachers.

Furthermore, in the view of 67% members of the school board and the 2 sampled principals, the SDA education department should only employ qualified teachers to improve learners` performance. In referring to those already employed, it was proposed that they should immediately be sent to do UCE to gain new knowledge and teaching skills which would contribute to improvement of performance in the MSCE examinations.

Similarly, the interviews with some members of the school board further revealed that the SDA education department should make sure that teachers are posted from one school to another. In their view, the SDA education department should ensure that no teacher stays at one duty station for more than 10 years.

Not only that, in agreement with the school principals, the 92% of the teachers also argued that the SDA education department should make sure that aptitude test administered is well standardised. They also contended that those given places in all forms should be learners who have genuinely passed the aptitude test. To their understanding, this would make the SDA secondary schools to have learners who have a positive school mind hence cases of indiscipline can be subdued. With this understanding, the researcher wanted to learn more from teachers about the learners` attitude towards education in SDA secondary schools. As such, teachers were asked if not all learners could show seriousness in academics. **Figure 4.9** shows teachers` responses concerning learners` attitude towards education.



**Figure 4.9: Teachers` perception on lack of academic seriousness by learners**

The **Figure 4.9** shows that many learners lack seriousness in education as indicated by teachers. This was confirmed by 67% of teachers who concluded that most of their learners could not show interest and seriousness in academic work.

Again, 92% of the members of the school board were of the opinion that the SDA education department should allow teaching and learning to commence on the first day and first period. Therefore, issues related to registration should be done after classes.

Observably, eight teachers drawn from three different selected SDA secondary schools that were among the respondents resonated in separate interviews concerning incentives. They claimed that for the learner`s academic performance to be enhanced the SDA education department in conjunction with the principals should make sure that funds are set aside every term to facilitate the giving out of incentives to learners for the outstanding academic performance in every term. It was also echoed by them that when the SDA education department is considering the incentives to learners, it should also adjust upward the salaries of the teachers to motivate them teach with all the zeal.

All over again, all mission pastors and 93% of sampled teachers were of the view that the SDA church should split the directorate of youth and education so that there should be an independent department of education headed by someone with teacher qualification. This would make the SDA schools to be reckoned with as the Director of Education will be fully committed to deal with academic issues in the church.

Lastly, four (4) members of the school board claimed that if performance is to be improved, the SDA education department should promote inspection and supervision in the SDA schools. Moreover, they should hire government education inspectors to provide a true reflection on the ground.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the discussion of the findings based on the data collected from the field and of course guided by the study research questions.

#### **5.1 Significant factors influencing learners' academic performance in the SDA secondary schools**

The study revealed that there are many factors influencing the academic performance of the learners in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi. However, late commencement of learning, indiscipline, enrolment of learners, pocket money of learners, inadequacy of textbooks, and inadequacy of laboratory materials were statistically established to be significant factors that influence the performance of the learners in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi.

##### **5.1.1 Commencement of learning**

The time allocated for teaching and learning need to be observed seriously when the school wants to achieve excellence in academic performance. This study revealed that commencement of learning was one of the significant factors influencing learners' academic performance in the selected SDA secondary schools across the country of Malawi. There are three school terms every year with holidays in between as determined by the Malawi government. The findings obtained indicated that in the selected SDA secondary schools learning does not start on the first day of each and every term and also the serious school mood starts in the second week after the school opens. This for sure, indicates that there is a lot of time wasted before normal learning begins. Based on the argument by Lezotte (2010), instructional time allocated for each subject must be adequate enough and strictly observed to ensure syllabi are covered and learning takes place to the fullest. As many schools have nine periods per days, it means a number of periods in a term go unproductive as in week one learning is not such real. In line with this, Eshiwani (1983) argues that most schools lose many teaching/ learning hours at the

beginning of the term. In his observation, Eshiwani highlights that the largest wastage of time occurs at the start of every term over problems associated with collection of fees. This simply means that the time wasted leads to less work being covered and syllabi not being completed hence contributing to poor performance of learners in the national examinations. In similar case, the findings are also in agreement with the findings by Chileya (2016) who conducted a study on factors affecting poor academic performance of pupils in junior secondary leaving examinations in selected day secondary schools in Mwense district, Luapula province. The focus of his research in pupils' performance in junior secondary leaving examinations found that poor academic performance was also caused by inadequate syllabi coverage. In the findings of Chileya, inadequate syllabi coverage was mainly attributed to the absenteeism of teachers and late reporting for lessons by both teachers and pupils. However, this study found that inadequate syllabi coverage was mainly due late reporting by teachers and also late commencement of serious learning when a new term begins. According to the Effective Schools Model by Lezotte (2010) after the understanding of the learning objectives, teachers should give learners an opportunity to learn such objectives as they also allocate amount of classroom time to instruction on the essential skills. This shows that in the SDA schools when in the first week serious learning is not done then the amount of classroom time for instruction in a term is limited. This means that learners sit for the national examinations without learning other essential skills. From the above background, the poor performance of learners in the selected SDA secondary schools in MSCE examinations could have been ascribed by the trend of poor management of time.

### **5.1.2 Discipline toward learners` academic performance**

Discipline is an important ingredient that plays a crucial role in the school system(Azizi, 2007).

Discipline encompasses a number of things and it is one of the elements of school culture in almost all secondary schools. In a case where there is lack of discipline it is said there is



indiscipline. According to Omote, Thinguri, and Moenga (2015), indiscipline can be seen as any action considered being wrong and not generally accepted as proper in a social set up or society. In school, students can portray indiscipline in any form of misbehaviour in several ways like disobedience, teasing, bullying, destruction of school property, poor attitude to learning, immoral behaviour, drug abuse, stealing, lateness, truancy, dirtiness, being quarrelsome, and use of abusive or foul languages. Lezotte (2010) in his third correlate talks about safe and orderly schools where he believes that for academic achievement in school to be seen there must be a culture characterized by reasonable expectations for good behaviour, consistent and fair application of rules and regulations, caring, and responsive relationships among adults and students. With this guidance, the study also aimed at learning more about discipline and application of school rules in the mission schools since they are greatly connected with academic performance.

Through data collected, it was revealed that discipline is a problem in the SDA secondary schools as such academic performance could not reach the satisfactory level. The findings of this study support the findings of a study by Kaimenyi (2013) on factors influencing academic performance of students in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Imenti north district, Kenya. The study revealed that most schools in Imenti North District had very low levels of discipline which greatly contributed to bad grades. Similarly, the findings are also in line with the findings of Yator (2003). In her study looking at factors that contribute to students' poor performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E.) Examinations in Kabartonjo division, Baringo district, she found that indiscipline caused poor performance because it demoralized the teaching force among other consequences. In concurring with Yator, Gitome, Katola, and Nyabwari (2013) assert that indiscipline makes learners to lose focus on educational goals which are achieved through hard-work, time management, respect for others

and self-determination. This implies that undisciplined learners are likely not to remain focused on their educational goals and aspirations, manage their time well, work harder in academics, and show determination to succeed academically. This is probably because undisciplined learners are more likely to be involved in disciplinary cases which may divert their attention from academic work. Therefore, learners are more likely not to be psychologically settled and ready for academic work which in long run pulls down their academic performance.

The study by Kaimenyi (2013) in Imenti north district, Kenya also revealed some of the indiscipline cases where learners could reach the extent of killing school mates. In contrary to the findings of Kaimenyi, this study did not find the indiscipline cases of murder, however, in all these sampled SDA schools, major indiscipline cases which were being noted by the school board members were smoking of Indian hemp (Chamba), sexual immorality and beer drinking. Two board members of school XA cited an incident which happened few years ago where other learners both boys and girls went out of bounds during night hours to a certain nearby trading centre as their usual behaviour. At that place, they were noticed drinking beer and eventually they booked rooms in pairs at a certain rest house for sexual fun. According to these school board members, it took the initiative of the particular senior traditional chief to alert the school administrators to come to that place and see for themselves what their school learners were doing.

A related incident was explained by a board member of school XC. The issue there was mainly Chamba smoking where a good number of learners could go to a certain man in the nearby village to buy and smoke Chamba. According to this member, the school management had to lobby with that Chamba seller to stop the act of entertaining their learners buying Chamba from him. Just as teachers, board members and students had pointed out, the principals of schools

XA and XC were agreeable that discipline was one of the issues that caused headache to the school management.

These principals said SDA secondary schools receive many deviant learners as most of them are rejects of government secondary schools and grant-aided secondary schools. According to them, parents send their wards to the SDA schools as reformatory centres since these schools are popularly governed by the principle of educating the whole being as stated in their mission statement of secondary schools, *“To assist the youth develop spiritually, mentally, physically and socially and prepare them to be useful citizens of the world and the world to come”*. This issue of taking SDA schools as reformatory centres has a part in influencing academic performance of learners in these schools as they have many ill-mannered learners who likely spoil others in school. This makes SDA secondary schools not to be effective since according to Lezotte (2010) an effective school needs to be safe and orderly where its culture must be characterized by reasonable expectations for good behaviour.

The findings of cases of indiscipline in the SDA schools in Malawi support the findings of an investigation done in selected Adventist secondary day schools in Northern and Central California. In that study, Rhoads (1986) found that Christian behaviour and social morality was perceived as lacking in the schools, and also parents and students desired improved disciplinary practices. Similarly, in the study conducted in Tanzania by Arego, Role, & Makewa (2014) on factors that influence in the implementation of Adventist holistic education in Mara conference, it was revealed that Mara Conference secondary schools were challenged by students' indiscipline which had a contribution to poor academic performance.

According to the study by Mussa (2015) which focused on the role of school discipline on students' academic performance in Dar Es' Salaam region, Tanzania, revealed that best

performing school had suitable school rules and regulations, applied fair and consistence punishments. Meanwhile, least performing schools had unsuitable rules and regulations, applied unfair and inconsistence punishments. On contrary to the findings of Mussa, this study found that all SDA secondary schools in Malawi had suitable school rules and regulations however, the problem was on implementation. Based on the information from some members of the school board and mission pastors during oral interviews, it was learnt that in other instances administrators and teachers could flop to pass judgement because their own wards were culprits. This being the case, misbehaviour could not be curbed as other learners were encouraged to misbehave knowing that no stiff punishment could follow as they had a reference point. They also further said that, school administrators were lenient in their decisions in fear that most learners would be suspended and even expelled. Therefore, once suspended or expelled would result into reduction of the school income as these schools depend on the number of learners for their operations through school fees paid by those learners. The issue of discipline and leniency in the application of school rules and regulations happened to be one of the significant factors influencing academic performance of learners in a negative way in these schools.

### **5.1.3 Admission of learners and learners` academic performance**

Regarding the admission of learners in SDA secondary schools, it was revealed that the normal procedure for enrolling learners in the SDA secondary schools is through writing aptitude test administered by the education department of the SDA church. The findings of this study concerning the administration of the aptitude test concurs with the findings of the study done by Mussa (2015) which focused on the role of school discipline on students` academic performance in Dar Es` Salaam region, Tanzania. Regarding the issue of learners admission, the Mussa`s study revealed that all head teachers in best performing secondary schools had

time to screen a candidate under rigorous procedures, including using diagnosis test. Those who passed the test with the average mark 50% were the only ones admitted in the school. However, compared to the findings by Mussa (2015), the findings of this study based on the information gathered from some of the principals, teachers, and mission pastors, the aptitude test administered by the SDA church had a lot to be desired. One teacher boldly said that the test lacked good standardization and screening in order to discriminate the capable students from those not ready for secondary stuff. These sampled participants echoed that the aptitude test administered had no real meaning as a good number of learners claimed to have passed the test performed poorly in all tests administered by teachers in these secondary schools. While acknowledging high expectations as one of the correlates of Effective Schools model by Lezotte (2010) in which he argues that teaching staff should always believe that all students can learn and meet high standards, it should be understood that learners enrolled without meeting the requirements give headache to teachers as their uptake of new knowledge and skills is very poor.

According to one member of the school board XA, who happened to be a retired teacher said that most learners were offered place for the sake of meeting the required capacity so that the school should be able to generate the reasonable funds for its administration purposes. He further lamented that such learners were the ones tarnishing the image of SDA schools as at the end particularly MSCE examinations they could perform poorly. In addition to that, one teacher in responding to one of the questions in the questionnaire given to him, he alluded to, that many learners in school XA were slow learners as the uptake of information from teachers was below average. This is in line with the findings of the study by Mussa (2015) on the role of school discipline on students' academic performance in Dar Es' Salaam region, Tanzania. The study further revealed that least performing schools were not following procedures like those done in the well performing schools in terms of enrolling learners as such it could give a

loophole to various undesirable behaviours to be accommodated with students who joined secondary education which could later impact on secondary school discipline and performance. However, it was also learnt that there were some learners who were in these schools without going through aptitude test. According to the principals, in some instances where schools want to fill out some spaces especially in forms two, three and four, students who have applied for a place do not sit for the aptitude test rather are told to produce a transcript from their recent past school. Though this is good to some extent still more the school needs to assess them through its aptitude test.

#### **5.1.4 Teaching and Learning resources versus learners` academic performance**

The adequacy and use of teaching and learning materials (teaching/learning materials in this study refer to: textbooks, laboratory equipment, maps, libraries, charts and etcetera) affect the effectiveness of a teacher's lesson. Teaching and learning resources enhance understanding of abstract ideas and improve performance. The findings of the study conducted by Malambo (2012) on factors affecting the academic performance of pupils in grant and non-grant aided schools revealed that the unsatisfactory performance of pupils was due to the inadequate teaching and learning resources among many others. Similarly, the study by Kaimenyi (2013) on factors influencing academic performance of students in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Imenti north district, Kenya also revealed that most schools in Imenti north district performed poorly because of lack of resources.

Therefore, for any school to operate effectively there is need of adequate and frequent use of teaching and learning materials such as recommended and prescribed text books, laboratory materials and among others that strongly affect the effectiveness of teaching and learning process. It is the provision of resources into the system and effective utilization of such resources that determine the success or achievement of the set goals of the system (Olabanji,

E, & Alaka, 2010). In the Effective School model, Lezotte (2010) asserts that after the understanding of the learning objectives, teachers should give learners an opportunity to learn such objectives as they also allocate amount of classroom time to instruction on the essential skills. Though Lezotte seems to pay much attention to classroom time, however, much time also need to be given to the learners to interact with adequate books and equipment in the library and laboratories respectively. When students have enough reading materials in their library, adequate laboratory equipment they are motivated to read on their own and do practical experiments in the laboratories. Studies by many scholars have shown that inadequacy/lack of resources in secondary schools lead to poor performance (Legotto & Sebego, 2002; Olatunde, 2010 & Olabanji, Obadara, & Alaka, 2010).

The study also sought to determine the available teaching and learning resources in in the SDA secondary schools as revealed in **Figures 4.7** and **4.8** above. The information provided in the figures clearly showed that all sampled schools had teaching and learning facilities like library and laboratories. According to the data presented, the general observation was that teaching and learning materials were provided but not to the required extent. Referring to the library, a well-equipped and fully operational library is necessary if the teaching and learning process is to be effective. Teaching and learning resources help both teachers and learners in the course of teaching and learning. To the part of teachers, for instance textbooks, help them to understand and get guidance of the topics intended to be taught. It is said that a textbook is important as it gives direction to the lesson, makes teaching easier and better organized. A textbook also provides confidence and security especially to the inexperienced teachers. Similarly to the side of learners, teaching and learning resources enhances understanding of abstract ideas and improve their performance as Ubogu (2004) argues that text books enable the learners to follow the teacher's sequence of presentation and aid in the understanding of lessons. Apart from recommended textbooks, prescribed textbooks, novels and also

dictionaries help to improve pronunciation. Again, good libraries have daily newspapers that enable learners to be exposed to current affairs, an aspect that is very valuable in examinations. Eshiwani (1983) found that there is a significant relationship between the availability of textbooks and academic achievement. With this in mind the researcher intended to establish whether there were enough textbooks in the schools. Based on **Figure 4.8**, majority of the students and teachers alluded to that libraries were well accessed in these schools by students. However, it was revealed that there was a huge crisis in terms of availability of text books for use in the three SDA secondary schools as many students and teachers indicated that the library had no enough text books. Much as the principal of school XC indicated that his school at least had enough text books but he quickly agreed with principals of schools XA and XB by disclosing that there was a big shortage of essential text books in SDA secondary schools in Malawi. The principal of school XA was of the opinion that given the correct and adequate requirements, the school would do better. The principal of school XA further lamented that they were going through hard times because of lack of instructional resources.

On the part laboratories, ideally a school should have a number of laboratories for teaching Physics, Agriculture, Chemistry, Biology, Home Economics, and Computer Studies since each of these disciplines needs a different set of equipment and facilities. Based on majority of learners and of teachers it was revealed that the available laboratories were well accessed by learners. Much as a certain percentage of sampled teachers and learners alluded to that laboratory facilities were well accessed by learners still more the majority of the sampled teachers and learners disagreed to the claim pointed out by other and learners. This showed that irregular access to the laboratories by learners had a certain negative impact to the performance of learners in the MSCE examinations. Even though learners had irregular access to the laboratories still there was another big challenge as those laboratories had no enough materials for practical work as lamented by the majority of learners and teachers. Lazarowita and Tamir



(2006) argue that practical work is important because it provides opportunities for learners to perform various hands-on activities. It should also be noted that these practical works also give students many opportunities to use their minds to discover general laws and principles of science. In the view of (Kulshretta, 2013), practical activities in science provide a number of advantages which include; skills development, planning, manipulation of equipment, observation, analysing, evaluating, experiential learning, testing out own ideas, testing out theories, developing of problem solving strategies and team work. Furthermore, from the observation carried out by the researcher, all the three sampled schools had computer laboratories but the number of computers would not match the number of students on the campus. Meanwhile, a good number of computers were also seen not to be functioning. The findings simply indicated shortage of these resources in schools.

From the findings, it was concluded that there was a very big shortage in terms of availability of teaching and learning resources in the selected SDA secondary schools in Malawi. The findings were similar to the findings of the study conducted by Adino (2015) on factors influencing students' performance in Mathematics in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in public secondary schools in Butere sub-county Kenya. In her findings, it was indicated that one of factors that was affecting learners' performance in Mathematics was lack of teaching and learning resources. In similar case, the findings are also in agreement with the findings by Chileya (2016) who conducted a study on factors affecting poor academic performance of pupils in junior secondary leaving examinations in selected day secondary schools in Mwense district, Luapula province. The focus of his research in pupils' performance in junior secondary leaving examinations found that poor academic performance was caused by insufficient of teaching and learning materials in schools among other factors. The findings of this study show that inadequate of teaching and learning resources hamper learners to support their studies. In most schools where there is poor performance in science subjects

happens because of lack of textbooks and chemicals for laboratory experiment experience (Myers, 2000). This being the case also in SDA secondary schools in Malawi, learning becomes difficult for the learners which eventually contribute to unsatisfactory performance in MSCE examinations in these selected SDA secondary schools.

### **5.1.5 Learners` pocket money**

For every learner to concentrate on the academic work properly needs to have money to meet other personal needs. In secondary school setting, as most learners are adolescents also need money for buying other things like toiletries, sugar, snacks, and the like. If these things are not available it is easy for the adolescents to lose concentration on the academic work. According to the findings of this study, many learners in the SDA schools are termly given the pocket money of MK20, 000.00 and below. From the experience of the researcher as a teacher by profession, many learners when they come from holiday are already given many groceries. As such, the amount which they are given in form of cash, is meant for buying other things which are mainly deemed not to be basic requirements. Therefore, in the view of the researcher the amount which they receive in a term suffice them as a lot of things are provided to them in terms of meals through their schools fees, and other groceries given to them when coming to school. However, on the other hand the amount given may not be enough especially to learners who are not academically minded. As already observed that the SDA schools have many learners who are not serious with education, the issue of pocket received may negatively affect them further as they might always be complaining that MK20, 000.00 and below is a little amount to them.

### **5.2 The influence of the named factors on learners` academic performance.**

Through document analysis, observation, administration of the questionnaires and oral interviews, it was found that there are many factors influencing learners` academic

performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi. It was observed that the exposed factors influence learners' academic performance in different ways however almost all of them result into one major consequence that is low academic performance in the MSCE examinations.

The study found out that the problem of poor time management in terms of lack of punctuality by teachers and also lack of learning on the first day was found to be affecting the performance of learners. The researcher from his experience understands that many course syllabi are very wide in terms of having so many topics to be covered and also most of the topics have got much content to be covered. As such, in line with the findings of the study by Chileya (2016), when teachers lose some minutes from their periods they are likely not to complete the syllabi hence learners sit for the MANEB examinations without being prepared fully.

In inquiring about indiscipline cases in SDA secondary schools, one of the rationale of looking at school culture factor was based on the assumption that indiscipline lead to poor performance as the findings of the studies by different scholars (Kaimenyi ,2013; Yator , 2003; Mussa ,2015; Gitome, Katola, & Nyabwari ,2013) state. When there are so many indiscipline cases in a school, administrators and teachers are frequently involved in handling such cases which means no teaching and learning takes place for all the times they are engaged in such dealings. Eventually teachers may not be in a position to complete the syllabi in good time to pave way for revision which may in long run influence the performance of learners in a negative way. Issues of indiscipline in SDA schools could make other learners who are well behaved to be spoiled by the deviant learners as they are coaxed to join their bad companies which eventually make them not to perform well.

This study also found that one of the factors persistently mentioned by many participants affecting the performance of the SDA schools was the nature of the learners these schools are having. The situation in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi is similar to what the study by

Mussa (2015) found in the least performing schools in Dar Es' Salaam region, Tanzania. In his study which focused on the role of school discipline on students' academic performance in Dar Es' Salaam region, Tanzania found that one of the factors why the schools were performing badly was the nature of learners. As noticed earlier that the crop of learners found in these schools are not fit for secondary school content as most of them are lazy in nature and below average where their mastery of stuff is very low and minimal. This entails that, no matter how best the teachers are, it is not easy for these schools to register wonderful results as private institutions are expected to perform.

This study found that most learners have no positive attitude towards education as evidenced by their lack seriousness towards academic issues in school. This behaviour of learners cannot lead the SDA schools to be reckoned with countrywide. In agreement with the study done in Buswelu ward in Ilemela District of Tanzania by Hezekiah (2016), having such crop of lazy learners in school could translate lack of ambitious learners hence no effort on themselves to achieve good performance. The study denoted that lack of self-drive in learners would not motivate teachers to teach with all the zeal hence in long run, learners are the ones to suffer due poor coverage of syllabi and good coaching by their teachers.

Further to that, as these schools have many learners who are below average in terms of academic performance, the few learners who are of average and above average tend to relax as their friends who are less interested in school become distractors which eventually make them fall into their category. This also reduced the spirit of competition among learners as those few average and above average learners become comfortable with the positions they get in their schools. This makes them relax as they think that they are always the best forgetting that there are also learners in other schools better than them working hard day and night to get good points in the MSCE examinations. Therefore, poor method of recruiting learners lead to

admitting incapable learners whose uptake of learning content is very low. This makes learners to have no competition amongst them which eventually affect even those who are intelligent.

In relation to the findings of the studies done by Legotto and Sebego (2002); Olatunde (2010), Olabanji, Obadara, and Alaka (2010), the findings of this study also show that in SDA schools there are inadequacy of teaching and learning resources which contribute to the low academic performance. This could be due to shortage of funds, poor library and laboratory management or loss due to theft. The consequence of this is that there could never be any tangible improvement in performance in MSCE examinations as students lack adequate practice in exam format, more exposure to exam techniques and confidence in exams.

### **5.3 What are the implications of these factors on learners` academic performance?**

The researcher discovered that in SDA secondary schools there are a number of factors related to school culture, socio-economic, and teaching and learning resources that influence learners` academic performance. Much as it has been revealed that these factors influence the performance of learners, this section explains more about the implications of such factors on learners` academic performance.

To begin with, it should be noted that if the school is faced by many challenges, it is likely that the pass rate would be low. This is evidenced by the findings of so many studies (Hezekiah, 2016; Kaimenyi ,2013; Yator ,2003; Chileya, 2016; Mussa, 2015 & Njuguna, 2011) carried out in different countries which have indicated that schools which are impinged by several factors end up performing poorly. This is also a case in the SDA secondary in which in the past five years (2014 – 2018) performance has not been satisfactory. This entails that there has been a good number of students failing to make the MSCE certificate.

Beside, having a number of students failing totally in the MSCE examinations, there have been some learners managing to pass the MSCE examinations but with few credits. Based on the Malawi National Examinations Board and the Ministry of Education, one is considered to have passed well when he or she has at least six credits including English. Due to several factors influencing the performance of learners in the mission schools, many learners who pass the MSCE examinations do not reach six credits. In addition to the above implications, some learners who pass the MSCE examinations do not pass with good points. Although six credits qualification in the MSCE certificate is highly valued by the institutions of higher learning, still the issue of aggregate of the points scored also matters most. Most public colleges and universities prefer to offer a place to learners with less than thirty six (36) points in six (6) subjects including English.

Therefore, with so many factors influencing the performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools, many learners who pass the MSCE examinations fall out of the selectable range of 36 points and below. This means that in the past five years, SDA secondary schools have not been sending many learners to the public institutions of higher learning in Malawi.

## **5.4 What academic interventions can be put in place to enhance learners` academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi?**

### **5.4.1 Languages used and learners` academic performance**

The study revealed that most participants were of the view that the principals and teachers should intensify the use of English language as a medium of communication among learners all the times if learners` academic performance is to be enhanced. English language plays a central and strategic role in the school system because almost all the school subjects are taught using English language. Through the observation checklist, the researcher noted that in almost all the three sampled schools learners could hardly express themselves in English. There were

low incidences of usage of English language as a medium of communication despite the Ministry of Education Policy that English be used as the medium of instruction and communication throughout the country except when learning other language subjects. In most cases, learners were heard communicating in vernacular languages. Based on the findings on the use of vernacular languages in schools mainly by learners, it was understood that it had a great influence on the performance of learners. Sticking to local languages makes learners fail to comprehend things as they are delivered and asked in English. This becomes a big challenge when they face MANEB examinations as they fail to understand the questions better leading them to answer off the questions. This likely impacts the whole school performance as when results are released it happens that a good number of them has failed or has no good points.

Regarding the languages used by learners among themselves, the study established that Chichewa and Chitumbuka were the most widely used. High preference on the vernacular languages is likely to have adverse effect on concept formation and articulation hence serious difficulties in comprehension, analysis and synthesis, translating to poor academic performance. It also makes many learners to have very poor knowledge of vocabularies used in various subjects. Lack of the use of English language also makes learners to have weak English capacity to the extent of failing to make good and logical sentence in English during national examinations. The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of the study done by Njuguna (2011) which aimed at establishing the school-based, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors influencing academic performance of public primary schools in Makuyu Division with a view to make recommendations for good performance. In his study, it was revealed that one of the school-based factors that influenced academic performance was the use of mother language in school and more so during the teaching/learning process. The findings of this study are further supported by the study on Factors affecting students' academic performance: A case of Public Secondary Schools in Ilala District, Dar – es – Salaam by

Maganga (2016) which revealed that poor capability in English limited learners' ability to understand concepts in various disciplines like History, Geography, Physics, Chemistry and the like. The less usage of the recommended mode of communication which is English language by learners, and the high preferences of Chichewa and Chitumbuka implied lack of clear and focused mission of the schools which is a correlate of effective school according to Lezotte (2010).

#### **5.4.2 PTA and learners' academic performance**

During oral interviews, most members of the board highlighted that there was one thing greatly needed for learners' academic performance to be enhanced in the SDA secondary schools which according to them was PTA. PTA greatly contributes to the smooth operation of the school in the process of trying to meet the school goals and mission. During oral interviews, most members of the board underlined that there were no PTAs in the SDA secondary schools. This was confirmed by the school principals that SDA secondary schools had no PTAs however, they had only Board of Governors in which few community members could represent parents. One school board member who could represent parents explained that apart from school board meetings, Parents Teachers Association meetings are very useful as both parents and teachers discuss the learners' progress and exchange ideas on how to improve performance. This is in line with the argument of Lezotte (2010) who states that for the school to be effective there must be high level of family and community involvement as they play a vital role in the achievement of the school goals.

According to Lezotte, family and community members have a responsibility to educate students, not just teachers and staff in schools. In the case where parents attend PTA meetings regularly, students feel important and worthy of their parents' time and eventually learners respond by working hard so as to impress their parents. When such students are rewarded during such forums, the parents feel proud and may support these students even further, thereby



improving the overall performance of the school. In such forums, parents learn more about the organisation of the school and they are able to critique some of the shortcomings of teachers and administrators which help the school to change and achieve good performance. Similarly, the findings by Chileya (2016) who conducted a study on factors affecting poor academic performance of pupils in Junior Secondary Leaving Examinations in selected day secondary schools in Mwense district, Luapula province, Zambia recommended by parents involvement in some schools affairs. Chileya (2016) arrived at this because he found out that non-parental involvement in the learning process of their children was among many causes of poor academic performance in Mwense district. Therefore, the findings of this study indicated that formation of PTA and regular PTA meetings would be another academic intervention that would positively influencing the learners' academic performance in the SDA secondary schools.

#### **5.4.3 Teaching and learning resources**

Through interaction with the participants, it was noted that provision of adequate teaching and learning resources would greatly enhance the learners' academic performance in the Malawi SDA secondary schools. From the data gathered, it showed that in SDA schools there was inadequate of teaching and learning resources. This could be due to shortage of funds, poor library and laboratory management or loss due to theft. The consequence of this is that there can never be any tangible improvement in performance in MSCE examinations as students lack adequate practice in exam format, more exposure to exam techniques and confidence in exams.

#### **5.4.4 Qualification of teachers**

The study also revealed that if SDA schools are to improve on learners' academic performance, the issue of employing non teachers should end. It was revealed that in the SDA secondary schools there are some teachers who are not teachers by profession. For instance, in school XC there were 16 teachers in total, and only 11 were qualified teachers while 5 teachers had bachelor degrees in other fields and worst still they had no UCE. According to Kaur (2004),

teachers' qualification is significant and can be used to predict students' performance. This provided evidence that teacher's academic qualification would be one of the strategies to enhance learners' academic performance in positive way in the SDA secondary schools.

The findings of this study concurs with the findings by Chileya (2016) who conducted a study on factors affecting poor academic Performance of pupils in junior Secondary leaving examinations in selected day secondary schools in Mwense district, Luapula province. The focus of his research in pupils' performance in Junior Secondary Leaving Examinations found that poor academic performance was caused by inadequate qualified human resource in schools among other factors. This happens in the way that unqualified teachers have no trained teaching skills and as a result delivery of content, drilling of students in preparation for examination, classroom management and other important activities are greatly compromised. This eventually affects the performance of learners as they approach examinations while not fully equipped.

#### **5.4.5 Overstaying of teachers at one school and Learners' academic performance**

In special oral interviews with the mission pastors, principals and board members varied responses regarding to their views on academic interventions leading to enhancement of academic performance in SDA schools were brought out. The majority of these interviewees indicated that overstaying of teachers at one school was among many other factors influencing low learner academic performance in SDA schools. Just as pastors and principals pointed out, a school board member of school XA was agreeable that overstaying of teachers at one school altogether with other factors impacted negatively on the learners' performance in the SDA secondary schools. According to his knowledge such teachers were resistant to change when the new administrator comes. In the interview, he further revealed that such teachers could argue that those new ideas would not work as different principals before that new principal tried the same but failed. The school board member of school XC similarly said that some

teachers because of overstaying at one place tend to challenge the new administrators sometimes because those administrators are younger than them in terms of age.

The interviews further revealed that some teachers had been at one school for over twenty (20) years. In the Effective School model, Lezotte (2010) points out that for school to be effective, leaders and teachers need to understand that their duty play a big role in achieving the vision as it is developed from common beliefs and values. This means that if teachers neglect their duty, it is not possible for the vision of the school to be achieved. In line with Lezotte's assertion, one school principal in an interview disclosed to the researcher that due to over staying some teachers become more less like villagers in which they fully take part in activities done in their local areas such like owning big farms, becoming football coaches and many more which in most cases affect their preparation and delivery of the instructional content. Therefore, it was noted that if the issue of overstaying of teachers at one place is controlled, learners' academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi would be enhanced.

#### **5.4.6 Learners' attitude towards education and learners' academic performance**

One the academic interventions echoed by the sampled teachers was admission of goal oriented learners. They argued that for a school to register good academic performance, it also requires learners who are goal-oriented and have positive attitude towards education. According to Maina (2010), learners with positive attitude are able to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly towards learning and generate the desired academic outcomes. Learners' positive attitude towards education is of paramount as it makes teachers to be very willing to assist learners to pass with good grades. Meanwhile, Learners who are not goal-oriented usually possess negative feelings regarding their school experiences, possess the traits of indiscipline, lack of diligence, not resourceful, and tend to devote more time towards recreation and leisure activities. Based on the data gathered, lack of seriousness in education by learners is likely to

poor methods of admitting learners in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi. This shows that once the church comes up with good modalities on admission of learners, these schools are likely to improve on learners` academic performance.

#### **5.4.7 Time management**

In trying to talk about academic interventions that can enhance performance in the Malawi SDA secondary schools, most participants touched the issue of proper time management. This study observed that the problem of poor time management in terms of lack of punctuality by teachers and also lack of learning on the first day was affecting the performance of learners. It was argued by two members of the school board based on their experience as retired teachers that many course syllabi are very wide in terms of so many topics to be covered and also most of the topics have got much content to be covered. As such when teachers lose some minutes from their periods they are likely not to complete the syllabi hence learners sit for the MANEB examinations without being prepared fully. In this study, it was suggested by most participants that administrators should ensure that teachers go to classes on time. In addition to that, most participants were of the view that learning should always start on day one and during first period in order to make sure that there is enough time in a term of covering the syllabi.

#### **5.4.8 Incentives**

During interaction with the sampled teachers, principals, and members of the school board, it was aired out that introduction of the incentives to learners would be one of the paramount interventions to enhance performance. Schools that promote excellence instil through their administrators the value of appreciating good performance among teachers and learners. During the study, it was learnt that teachers were being rewarded every year for the good grades produced in their particular subject once MSCE examination results are out. This was

confirmed by the majority of the sampled teachers while only few alluded that teachers were not given incentives.

The school that encourages learners to congratulate best performers motivate learners as this is likely to happen to them when they too perform in an exemplary manner. Learners in school without such a culture just attend classes without any expectation of being congratulated or recognized publicly by both teachers and fellow learners for good performance. It was also revealed that the practice of motivating learners by giving incentives in recognition of their good performance in every term would enhance learners` performance. Based on the findings, it is clear that schools do not have a practice of offering incentives and token of recognition mainly to students for excellent performance. The findings of this study are in agreement with the recommendations by Chileya (2016) that for poor academic Performance of pupils to be reduced there is need of the introduction of teacher/pupil motivation in schools and among other factors. Schools that encouraged excellent performance have a culture of setting a fund to reward both teachers and students who exhibit exemplary performance. However, other schools raise many excuses like shortage of funds so as to justify the lack of a reward culture in these institutions. Based on the data given above, motivating students by giving incentives stands as one of the academic interventions that would enhance learners` academic performance in the Malawi SDA secondary schools.

#### **5.4.9 SDA Education Directors and Learners` academic performance**

In the view of Lezotte (2010), for the school to become effective there must be strong instructional leaders. Lezotte argues that strong instructional leaders are always proactive and try to build team leadership and a culture conducive to learning and professional growth. In his model he emphasises that, in the effective school the head teacher and others in administration play a role as instructional leaders where they communicate and model the mission of the

school to staff, parents, and students. Much as he seems to focus on the administration of the head teachers and other administrators below him, this study begins with the leadership above the head teacher. In oral interviews, mission pastors, principals and board members brought out varied responses as regard to their views on academic interventions to boost academic performance in SDA schools. The majority of the mission pastors, principals and board members interviewed indicated that, changes in education directorship was among many other academic interventions leading to high learners` academic performance in SDA schools. Another male board member from School XA on the same factor stressed that, some of the Education Directors in the SDA church had no teacher education qualification and also had never been teachers before. Therefore, they know less about education administration as they are not teachers by profession.

In agreement with the male teacher from School XA, a mission pastor from School XC said that, the officers who are elected to be in control of education also have a task to lead the youth ministry. According to this pastor, in most cases such an officer is elected to that position because of his knowledge and activeness in the activities of Adventist Youth (AY) Ministry. Once elected into that office the number one thing he does is to make sure that the AY Ministry is vibrant. It was learnt that some Education Directors finish their term of office without managing visiting all schools under their charge. The findings show that most Education Directors are much occupied with the activities of the youth in the church rather than in education. It was revealed that some pastors who have teacher education background have had the view of creating a special office for education at the Union level and as well as at Conference level as it is the case at the General Conference and Division levels. However, their views have not been aired out in fear to be noted as rebels and also to be considered as individuals who are power hungry is thinking that once that post is created they will ascend to that. Therefore, the issue of having well capable teachers to head the education department was

found to be one of the academic interventions that could enhance learners` academic performance in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi.

#### **5.4.10 Inspection/Supervision and learners` academic performance**

Through special interviews with principals and mission pastors, some of these participants raised the issue of inspection and supervision as one of the interventions to enhance good performance in the SDA secondary schools. For a school to be effective there is need of frequent monitoring of teaching and learning. This requires paying attention to both learner learning results and to the effectiveness of school and classroom procedures (Lezotte, 2010). Learning is monitored by tracking a variety of assessment results such as test scores, performances, and other evidence of learning. In this case, the excise of inspection helps the teachers to improve their teaching as they are able to see more clearly the problems and needs of learners. They also give guidance to teachers so as to develop greater competence in teaching. The findings revealed that in most cases, SDA secondary schools in Malawi do not have thorough inspection and supervision excises. In commenting on this issue, the principal of school XC said this;

*“Sometimes we are supervised once in a term by the Union Education Director. He is accompanied by other individuals who sometimes happen to be teachers from secondary schools”.*

Therefore, based on the above findings, for academic performance to be enhanced in the SDA secondary schools, there is need of sufficient inspection and supervision of schools by trained government inspectors

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of the findings and recommendations of the study based on the data collected from the field.

#### **6.1 Summary of the findings**

This study aimed at establishing factors influencing the low academic performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools in Malawi. As such, the general findings of the study show that there are many factors that influence academic performance of learners in the SDA secondary schools. However, based on the research questions of this study, the study established the following:

Research question one sought to establish the factors that are significant in influencing learners' academic performance in the selected SDA secondary schools in Malawi. In view of the above objective various factors were identified as contributing to poor performance in MSCE examinations in selected day secondary schools in Malawi. These included: late commencement of learning, indiscipline, enrolment of learners, pocket money of learners, inadequacy of textbooks, and inadequacy of laboratory materials. These were the emerging themes under which objective findings were presented in line with objective number one.

Research question number two sought to understand how do the factors presented in the research question number one influence learners' academic performance in the selected SDA secondary schools in Malawi. Based on the findings it was noticed the selection system used lead to admission of the poor crop of learners that do not be fit for secondary school content as they are lazy in nature and below average hence their masterly of stuff is very low and minimal. Further to that, lazy learners are distractors to the few learners who are average and above



average which eventually make them fall into their category. The issue of indiscipline cases in SDA secondary schools has been found to have many bad aftermaths as administrators and teachers are frequently involved in handling such cases in which teaching and learning is affected all the times they engaged in such dealings. Eventually, teachers would not be in a position to complete their syllabi in good time to pave way for revision which in long turn influence the performance of learners in a negative way. The researcher found that most learners have no positive attitude towards education as a result teachers are not be motivated to teach with all the zeal hence in long run, learners are the ones suffering due poor coverage of syllabi and good coaching by their teachers. From the data gathered, it shows that in SDA schools there is inadequate of teaching and learning resources. This makes students to lack adequate practice in exam format, more exposure to exam techniques and confidence in exams. Finally, the problem of poor time management in terms of lack of learning on the first day was found to be affecting the performance of learners. This makes teachers not to complete the syllabi hence learners sit for the MANEB examinations without being prepared fully.

Research question number three aimed at looking at the implications of the raised factors in research question number one toward learners` academic performance. The researcher discovered that in SDA secondary schools there are a number of factors related to school culture, socio-economic, and teaching and learning resources that influence learners` academic performance. It was revealed that these factors have great implications on the performance of learners in the MSCE examinations. The well-known implications are that some learners fail to make the MSCE and on the hand those who manage to make it, a good number of them pass with few credits and with many points making them to have no chances of being picked in the public institutions of higher learning.

Research question four aimed at soliciting views of the participants on what academic interventions would be employed to enhance learners` academic performance. Through the study, it was revealed that if the church and schools can work on the following areas performance would be enhanced: vibrant PTA, genuine inspection and supervision, changes in education directorship, well standardised aptitude test, over staying of teachers, languages used in schools, qualification of teachers, incentives, and teaching and learning resources

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:-

1. The SDA education department should arrange for consultative meetings to hear from different stakeholders on how it can enhance education.
2. The SDA education department in conjunction with the principals should ensure that learners have adequate time on their studies than on church activities.
3. The SDA education department should make sure that aptitude test administered is well standardized and those given places in all forms should be learners who have genuinely passed the aptitude test.

### **6.3 Recommendations for further Studies**

The researcher suggests that the following areas require further research:

1. A study need to be carried out to establish why some mission schools like those of Roman Catholic Church perform better in MSCE examinations than of the SDA church.
2. A similar study should also be carried out only in schools run by the conferences to give a balanced view of the factors which influence learner academic performance in the SDA schools.
3. Further research is also required to study on the factors that lead to students' indiscipline cases in the SDA schools.
4. It would also be worthy, a research to be done on other factors influencing students` performance in MSCE for example the family background of learners and school climate

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Research Timeframe

ACTIVITY	MONTH
Development of Research topic	October 2018
Writing of Introduction	November 2018
Writing of Literature review	December 2018
Writing Methodology	January 2019
Presentation of proposal	26-27 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Submission of proposal	15 <sup>th</sup> March 2019
Data collection	May 2019
Presentation of the findings of the study	25-26 June 2019
Data Analysis	July 2019
Thesis compilation	August 2019
Thesis presentation	24 <sup>th</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup> September 2019
Thesis Submission	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2019

## Appendix B: Information Sheet for the participant

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Moses Nyasulu a post graduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Teacher Education. I am carrying out a study on “**Factors influencing learner academic performance in the Seventh - day Adventist secondary schools in Malawi**” as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Master’s Degree.

The findings of the study will help the School administrators and also will provide data that can be used to improve management practices for improved academic performance. To the side of the teachers, will help them to check their conducts since they contribute either positively or negatively towards student academic performance. The findings will also be of benefit to the education department of the SDA church to work tirelessly in dealing with toxic school culture to improve learner academic performance.

I would like to ask for your permission so that I conduct face- to- face interview with you or fill in the questionnaire. All the data collected will be confidential and stored in a computer file secured by a password and no-one will have access to the data except me and my supervisor. In addition, no real name and that of your school will be indicated. If you have any question or queries you can contact me as the researcher by using the cell phone number or email provided or my supervisor: **Researcher** (0999077742, [mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com](mailto:mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com)) **Supervisor** (0999286180, [chrismpewe67@yahoo.com](mailto:chrismpewe67@yahoo.com)).

I will provide you with a summary of my research results on completion if you would like me to.

Thank you.

Name: ----- (researcher)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix C: Informed Consent Form for the participant

I \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in this study conducted by-----  
on the “**Factors influencing learner academic performance in the Seventh - day Adventist secondary schools in Malawi**”. I realize that no negative consequences will result from my participation in this study, and that the study is being conducted for purposes of improving the academic performance in the SDA secondary schools. I participate voluntarily and understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I further consent to being interviewed or fill in the questionnaire as part of the study. I also understand that I have the right to review the notes made of our conversations before these are used for analysis if I so choose. I can delete or amend any material or retract or revise any of my remarks. Everything I say or write will be kept confidential by the interviewer. I will only be identified by a pseudonym in the research report. In addition, any persons I refer to in the interview and the name of the school will be kept confidential.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D: Letter to the Director of Education (Malawi Adventist Union)**

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Luwinga

Mzuzu

Cell: 0888897446/0999077742

[mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com](mailto:mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com)

16<sup>th</sup> April, 2019

The Education Director  
Malawi Adventist Union  
P.O. Box 386  
Lilongwe

Dear Sir

**REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS UNDER THE MALAWI ADVENTIST UNION.**

I am a post graduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Teacher Education. I am carrying out a study on “**Factors influencing learner academic performance in the Seventh - day Adventist secondary schools in Malawi**” as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Master’s Degree. The study will involve teachers, learners, members of the school board, Education Directors, and school administrators.

I am therefore writing to request permission to carry out this study in some of the institutions within your union.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' and 'N' with a horizontal line extending to the right and a vertical line ending in an arrowhead pointing downwards.

**Moses Nyasulu**

## Appendix E: Letter to the principal at School XA

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Luwinga

Mzuzu

Cell: 0888897446/0999077742  
[mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com](mailto:mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com)

16<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.

Dear Sir

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

I am a post graduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Teacher Education. I am carrying out a study on “**Factors influencing learner academic performance in the Seventh - day Adventist secondary schools in Malawi**” as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Master’s Degree. The study will involve teachers, learners, members of the school board, Education Directors, and school administrators.

I am therefore writing to request permission to carry out this study in your school.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' and 'N' with a horizontal line extending to the right and a downward arrow at the end.

**Moses Nyasulu**

## Appendix F: Letter to the principal at School XB

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Luwinga

Mzuzu

Cell: 0888897446/0999077742

[mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com](mailto:mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com)

16<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.

Dear Sir/Madam

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

I am a post graduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Teacher Education. I am carrying out a study on “**Factors influencing learner academic performance in the Seventh - day Adventist secondary schools in Malawi**” as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Master’s Degree. The study will involve teachers, learners, members of the school board, Education Directors, and school administrators.

I am therefore writing to request permission to carry out this study in your school.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' and 'N' with a horizontal line extending to the right and a vertical line ending in a hook.

**Moses Nyasulu**

**Appendix G: Letter to the principal at XC**

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Luwingu

Mzuzu

Cell: 0888897446/0999077742

[mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com](mailto:mosesnyasulu@yahoo.com)

16<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.

Dear Sir/Madam

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

I am a post graduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Teacher Education. I am carrying out a study on “**Factors influencing learner academic performance in the Seventh - day Adventist secondary schools in Malawi**” as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Master’s Degree. The study will involve teachers, learners, members of the school board, Education Directors, and school administrators.

I am therefore writing to request permission to carry out this study in your school.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours faithfully



**Moses Nyasulu**

### **Appendix H: Observation Checklist**

<b>1. Outlook of the school</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
a. Floor	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]

b. Doors and windows	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
c. Desks	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
d. Toilets / pit latrines	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
e. General cleanliness of the campus:	Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
f. Use of English	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
<b>2. Discipline (teachers)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
a. Dressing	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
b. Hair cut style	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
c. Face make-ups	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
d. Teacher punctuality	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
<b>3. Discipline (learners)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
e. Dressing	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
f. Hair cut style	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
g. Face make-ups	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
h. Learner Punctuality	: Good [ ]	Not good [ ]
<b>4. Display of school documents</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
a. Vision	: Displayed [ ]	Not displayed [ ]
b. Mission Statements	: Displayed [ ]	Not displayed[ ]
c. School rules and regulations	: Displayed [ ]	Not displayed[ ]
d. End of term results	: Displayed [ ]	Not displayed[ ]

## Appendix I: Document Analysis Guide

### SDA SCHOOLS ENROLMENT AND PASS RATE

	<b>A</b>				<b>B</b>				<b>C</b>			
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>TE</b>	<b>TP</b>	<b>PR%</b>	<b>TS</b>	<b>TE</b>	<b>TP</b>	<b>PR%</b>	<b>TS</b>	<b>TE</b>	<b>TP</b>	<b>PR%</b>	<b>TS</b>
<b>2010</b>												
<b>2011</b>												
<b>2012</b>												
<b>2013</b>												
<b>2014</b>												
<b>2015</b>												
<b>2016</b>												
<b>2017</b>												
<b>2018</b>												

**A,B,C Study areas**

**TE Total number of students enrolled**

**TP Total number of students passed**

**PR% Total number of students passed in percentage**

**TS Total number of students within selectable range (less than 36 points)**

## Appendix J: Students' Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data on factors influencing academic performance of learners in Malawi School Certificate of Education Examinations in selected SDA secondary schools. The researcher assures you that the information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Fill this questionnaire to your at most ability

Please tick where appropriate or fill in the required information in the spaces provided.

#### Section A: Demographic Data

- i. Age : -----
- ii. Your gender : 1. Male [ ] 2. Female [ ]
- iii. Religion : 1. SDA [ ] 2. Others [ ]
- iv. Ethnicity : 1. Chewa [ ] 2. Others [ ]

#### Section B: School culture factors

1. When school opens do you report in week one?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
2. Do you normally manage to report for lessons in time?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
3. Do majority of your teachers observe punctuality when coming to your class to teach?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
4. Do your teachers give you Continuous Assessment frequently in various subjects?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
5. Which procedure is followed when finding a place at this school?  
1. APTITUDE TEST [ ] 2. RELATIONS [ ]
6. Did you find a place after passing the aptitude test?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
7. Are teachers dedicated towards their work?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
8. Do other students come without following the normal procedure?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
9. Does learning in all periods start on the first day of opening?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
10. Do you have a girl/boyfriend?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]



11. If YES does it contribute positively to your academic performance?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
12. Is discipline observed among all learners?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
13. Are school rules applied on all learners fairly?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
14. Do learners participate in the church activities like choir singing?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
15. Do those church activities done frequently?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
16. Has the academic performance of learners in MSCE Examinations for the past 5 years (2014 - 2018) been good?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

**Section C: Socio-economic factors**

17. What is the education of your guardian?  
 1. Primary [ ]                      2. Secondary and above [ ]
18. How much is earned by your guardian in a month?  
 1. 0-100,000.00 [ ]      2. 100,000.00 and above [ ]
19. Do your parents provide you with all learning resources that you require?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
20. If YES list them: \_\_\_\_\_
21. How much pocket money are you given per term?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
22. Do your parents ask you about your school work?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
23. Do your parents encourage you to work hard in school?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
24. Do your guardians make initiative to discuss your academic performance with your subject teachers or head teacher?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

**Section D: Teaching/learning Resources factors**

25. Does your school provide you with basic learning materials such as essential text books?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
26. If YES list them: \_\_\_\_\_

27. Does your School have a Library?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

28. Do you frequently use the library?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

29. Does your School library have enough text books

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

30. Does your School have laboratories?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

31. Do you frequently use the laboratories?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

32. Do your School laboratories equipped with enough materials

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

**Section E: Briefly give explanation**

33. Which of the factors negatively influence learners` academic performance in your school?

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Absenteeism of teachers	
Education level of guardians	
Religious activities	
School leadership	
Overcrowding in classrooms	
Shortage of laboratories	
Shortage of laboratory materials	
Shortage of textbooks	
Frequent participation in church activities	
Teachers having love affairs with students	

34. Explain how the factors you have ticked influence your academic performance?

---

---

35. What should the school be doing in order to improve your academic performance in this school?

---

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**

## Appendix K: Teachers' Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data on factors influencing academic performance of learners in Malawi School Certificate of Education Examinations in selected SDA secondary schools. The researcher assures you that the information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Fill this questionnaire to your at most ability

Please tick where appropriate or fill in the required information in the spaces provided.

#### Section A: Demographic Data

- v. Age : -----
- vi. Your gender : 1. Male [ ] 2. Female [ ]
- vii. Religion : 1. SDA [ ] 2. Others [ ]
- viii. Ethnicity : 1. Chewa [ ] 2. Others [ ]
- ix. Level of education : 1. Diploma [ ] 2. Others [ ]
- x. Years of teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_ years.

#### Section B: School culture factors

- When school opens do you report in week one?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
- Do you normally manage to report for lessons in time?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
- Do all teachers punctual when coming to class to teach?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
- Do all teachers give Continuous Assessment frequently in various subjects?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
- If NO give a reason \_\_\_\_\_
- Which procedure is followed when students want to find a place at this school?  
1. APTITUDE TEST [ ] 2. RELATIONS [ ]
- Do other students come without following the normal procedure?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]
- Which procedure is followed when employing teachers at this school?  
INTERVIEWS [ ] RELATIONS [ ]
- Did you find a place after passing the interviews?  
1. YES [ ] 2. NO [ ]

10. Do other teachers come without following the normal procedure?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
11. Does full learning start on the first day of opening?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
12. Is discipline observed among all learners?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
13. Are school rules applied on all learners fairly?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
14. Do learners participate in the church activities like choir singing?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
15. Do those church activities done frequently?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
16. Has the academic performance of learners in MSCE Examinations for the past 5 years (2014 - 2018) been good?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

**Section C:      Socio-economic factors**

17. Does the school provide accommodation to all teachers?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
18. Are teachers comfortable with the accommodation provided by the school?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
19. What is your income per month?  
 1. 0-100,000.00 [ ]      2. 100,000.00 and above [ ]
20. Are you comfortable with what you are paid by the schools?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
21. Does the school give incentives to learners who have performed well in the end of term examinations?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]
22. Does the school give incentives to teachers after MSCE results?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

**Section D:      Teaching/learning Resources factors**

23. Does your school provide you with basic teaching/learning materials such as essential text books?  
 1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

24. If YES list them: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

25. Does your school provide you with adequate stationary for administering Continuous Assessment?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

26. Does your School have a Library?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

27. Do learners frequently use the library?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

28. Does your School library have enough text books?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

29. Does your School have laboratories?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

30. Do learners frequently use the laboratories?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

31. Do your School laboratories equipped with enough materials?

1. YES [ ]                      2. NO [ ]

**Section E: Briefly give explanation**

32. What are some of the factors that make learners not perform well in national examinations?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe how the factors mentioned negatively affect school academic performance?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

33. What are the implications of these factors on learners` academic performance?

\_\_\_\_\_

34. What measures should the school put in place to improve learner academic performance in your school?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**

## Appendix L: Principals` Interview Guide

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data on factors influencing academic performance of learners in Malawi School Certificate of Education Examinations in selected SDA secondary schools. The researcher assures you that the information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

1. How many years have you been working as a teachers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years have you been working as a head teachers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. When school opens do all teachers report for duties on first day?  
  
If NO give a reason\_\_\_\_\_
4. Does full learning start on the first day of opening?  
If NO give a reason\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do all teachers normally manage to report for lessons in time?  
If NO give a reason\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do all teachers give Continuous Assessment frequently in various subjects?  
If NO give a reason\_\_\_\_\_
7. Does your school provide teachers with adequate stationary for administering Continuous Assessment?  
If NO give a reason\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do other students come without following the normal procedure?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Do other teachers come without following the normal procedure?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What has been the academic performance of learners in MSCE Examinations for the past 5 years (2014 - 2018)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What are some of the factors that make learners not perform well in national examinations?

---

---

12. Describe how the factors mentioned negatively affect school academic performance?

---

---

13. What are the implications of these factors on learners` academic performance?

---

---

14. What measures should the school put in place to improve pupil academic performance in your school?

---

---

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data on factors influencing academic performance of learners in Malawi School Certificate of Education Examinations in selected SDA secondary schools. The researcher assures you that the information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

**Section 1: Demographic Data**

- i. Your gender : Male [ ] Female [ ]
- ii. Designation : Member [ ] Others(Specify)\_\_\_\_\_
- iii. Years of experience as a school board member\_\_\_\_\_years.

**Section 2: Open ended questions**

1. When school opens do all teachers report for duties on first day?

If NO give a reason\_\_\_\_\_

2. Does full learning start on the first day of opening?

If NO give a reason\_\_\_\_\_

3. What has been the academic performance of learners in MSCE Examinations for the past 5 years (2014 - 2018)?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What things have changed that contribute to low academic performance?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What should be done to make sure that there is improved learner academic performance in your school?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**

**Appendix N: Mission pastors` Interview Guide**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data on factors influencing academic performance of learners in Malawi School Certificate of Education Examinations in selected



SDA secondary schools. The researcher assures you that the information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

1. How many years have you been working as a Pastor?

---

2. How many years have you been working as a Mission Pastor?

---

3. Do other students join SDA secondary schools without following the normal procedure?

---

If YES explain \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do other teachers SDA secondary schools without following the normal procedure?

---

If YES explain \_\_\_\_\_

5. What has been the academic performance of learners in MSCE Examinations for the past 5 years (2014 - 2018)?

---

6. What are some of the factors that make learners not perform well in national examinations?

---

---

7. Describe how the factors mentioned negatively affect school academic performance?

---

---

8. What are the implications of these factors on learners` academic performance?

---

---

9. What measures should the school put in place to improve pupil academic performance in your school?

---

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**