Investigating The Implementation of National Education Standards in a Centralized Management System: A Case of Secondary Schools in South East Education Division

By

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Leadership and Management

At

Mzuzu University

August, 2023

DECLARATION

I, Violet Duwa declare that the organization and writing of this dissertation are entirely my own and has been carried out at Mzuzu University under the supervision of Dr Margaret Maligzani Mdolo. It has not been, nor is it being concurrently submitted for any other degree than the Degree of Master Education (Leadership and Management) of Mzuzu University.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To God the author of my story and guarantor of life, where I get the wisdom and intelligence and strength to keep going. My Dad who always trusts that I can do bigger things and has always been my greatest support, I dedicate this work to you.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the implementation of National Education Standards in a centralized education management. The objectives were to explore the implementation of the NES under management within the centralized education system, to establish managers knowledge of the centralized management system and the National Education Standards under management, to analyse the implication of managing secondary schools in a centralized system in achieving effective practices of the NES under management and to identify factors affecting the achievement of effective practices on NES under management. The research used a case study design while adopting a qualitative approach within the interpretivism paradigm which helped the researcher to have a deeper understanding of each case. The study was guided by a conceptual framework derived from two management theories namely bureaucratic and structural theories. Schools which participated were sampled from the South East Education Division (SEED). Data was collected through interviews and document analysis. The instruments were piloted before actual data collection and prior to data collection, consent was sought from MZUNIREC which gave ethical clearance. The collected data was managed by storing it in different forms like audio, written notes, and pictures to prevent it from getting lost or to avoid tampering with it. Then the data was analysed thematically, the findings of the study were that some managers have an understanding of the National Education Standards and it was revealed that Malawian Secondary schools are managed under a highly centralized system, this system brings complications to management and the achievement of the National education standards. Factors like inadequate resources, knowledge gap, lack of cooperation between managers and their subordinates were found to have an effect on the achievement of the National Education Standards in the different schools.

K*eywords:* Education Management, Centralized Education System, National Education Standards.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMNS

MZUNIREC **:** Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee

MoE **:** Ministry of Education

NES **:** National Education Standards

NDP **:** National Decentralization Policy

SEED **:** South East Education Division

OECD **:** Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

MOEST **:** Ministry of Education Science and Technology

PTA : Parents, Teacher Association

EDM **:** Education Division Manager

NES **:** National Education Standards

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The operational definitions presented in this study are as follows:

Educational Management

Field of study and practice concerned with the operation of educational organizations centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education

Education decentralization

The process of concentrating authority and decision making in the centre or at the top of the hierarchy of an organization for example teachers making the curricula for the students (Nir, 2020).

Education decentralization

World Bank, 2013 defines decentralization as strengthening democratization, cultural and indigenous rights, local accountability and local governance.

Education Standards

Standards are reference points for teaching and learning programs and for assessing students' progress.

Education System

Economic and social factors that typically make up public schools at the federal, state or community level.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study

Educational centralization denotes to the condition where the central government of a country has complete power and control over the education system. Centralization offers administrative authority not to the local community, but in the central body. The central body has supremacy over almost every resource. These include people, money, information, technology (Brennen, 2002). Not only that, the central office decides the content of the curriculum, controls the budget, responsible for recruitment, accountable to building of educational facilities, discipline as well as policy implementation.

To an advantage, centralization provides for maximum control over the entire organization, as such it ensures that work is performed in the same manner and in accordance with the same general policies and principles (Marume & Jubenkanda, 2016). Other writers augment and narrates that, education centralization advances uniformity of management since the phase of planning, management, evaluation and development of model of school and learning gets more integrated (Karlsen, 2000). It is also supposed that local government units lack expertise and personnel to run local education services smoothly (Herman, 2018). As such, schools are run better in centralized systems in attempt to minimize the need for more human capital. On the other side, its cons are that, there is limited coordination of policy plans articulated by the government through the Ministry of Education with administrators on the ground (Nir, 2021).

Centralization nonetheless curtails the role of involvement of individuals in the bottom levels, decisions and policies made by the top are implemented at the bottom (Brennen, 2002).

Within this system, division of labour, structure and basis of the authority, the position and job description of each employee, rules regulating the relationship of people at different positions are already determined and leads to autocratic control over subordinates (Marume & Jubenkanda, 2016). This fails to give school managers the ability to engage themselves, be creative and resourceful in problem solving. Not only that, the centralized system makes the response to local educational needs very sluggish. Managing several and complex organizations such as schools is almost impossible in this system because it does not fit in the current trends of educational management of team work and shared decision making, that is rendering to (Brennen, 2002).

To comprehend Management, it is as well important to know its significance and the difference it makes to the school. Management affects how schools are run and its final outcomes (Bush, 2005). Management is beheld in different dimensions, it is an executive position for carrying out agreed education policy, also connected with the internal operations of education institutions (Bush, 2005). The core responsibility lies in policy and transformation of schools while maintaining a good relationship with their environment. Management does not entail a single thing or responsibility, rather it is a set of activities directed towards efficient and effective utilization of organizational resources in order to achieve organizational goals (Sapre, 2002). Governments have the constitutional power to impose their will, but successful innovations require the commitment of those who have to implement these changes (Bush, 2015). Dermirtas & Karaca (2020) coincides that management consists of different activities. These are categorized in three main processes namely Technical, Human and Conceptual. Technical skills of a manager denote the functional specialization or expertise in a specific area while human skills refer to interpersonal relationships and how successful a manager is in terms of planning, directing, coordinating and controlling other peoples' activities to achieve some orchestrated outcomes.

Finally, the conceptual skills define the managers' ability to see the organization as a whole. All the skills are significant across all hierarchical levels (Demirtas & Karaca, 2020). At times management is mistaken for leadership but the two overlap, managing well often exhibits leadership skills. Educational management is similarly in diverse types, consequently different countries have a choice of which type or system they would follow depending on the needs of the people and the set educational goals. These types include Centralized and decentralized educational management, External and Internal Educational management, Authoritarian/Autocratic and democratic educational management and creative educational management. How schools are managed affects how people work and the outcomes of the school, for the same reason, the study was set to reconnaissance.

1.1.2. The Malawian Education System

Governments in several developing countries for example Malaysia and Tanzania have given solemn consideration to decentralization of education. (World Bank, 2013). Just as other countries, Malawi adopted its decentralization policy after about thirty years of a highly centralized one-party rule. In 1998 a decision to decentralize primary school education came in by ministry of local government which passed a policy called *the National Decentralization Policy* (NDP), Local Government Act (1998). One of the reasons of such a policy was to promote good governance. The supposition of the policy was to make districts able to make decisions. Decentralization is supposed to make district offices responsible and accountable for activities in the district (Kufaine & Mtapuri, 2004). After 2 decades since the decentralization policy, it was noted however that there is a limit to which power was given to officials at the district level.

The structure of education remains the top-down approach, but it was supposed to go as far as schools, after decentralization the structure tranquil seems to end at the district. Studies have shown that the district education office has little or no power over some issues, for example, curriculum content, teachers' disciplinary action, recruitment and promotion (Jagero et al., 2014). These powers that are not decentralized affect the operation of managers either at the district level or school level (Barnett, 2018).

Chimombo, (2014) also institute that in cases of school management, teachers who are supposed to have authority to make decisions at school are undermined, as such implementation of decentralization in Malawi has been seen as a challenge. As (Kafumbu,2017) also put it, the education system is practically tranquil operating bureaucratically. This contradicts the definition of management by North House (2016) who defined centralization as exercising authority, making decisions as well as directing and coordinating tasks relevant to institutional goals. The Malawi Education Act (2013) is another clear evidence of a centralized system of education in Malawi. It is the minister of education who has the highest authority as regards policy-making and administration of both the primary and secondary curricula.

It is also important to note that the decentralization policy only applies to primary education. Governance and management of primary education was decentralized with most of the powers devolved to local councils, whilst that of secondary schools remain bureaucratic. The desire is to move towards full decentralization in due course. Since the legislation made by the Malawi government only decentralized primary education, it entails that some functions are as they used to be run in the early years of independence. Secondary education teacher qualifications, salaries, transfers, promotions, appointments, rules and regulations, transfers and many other administrative duties rest in the control of the central office.

These, therefore, have a direct or indirect touch on school management especially at secondary school. Either system of education, central or decentralized, might end up having effects that distress the management of schools together with its outcomes.

The factors cannot be concluded however, in a study steered in Indonesia for instance; it was noted that not only the above factors can affect school management but also factors like the competence of school principals/heads, curriculum development, entrepreneurship, training, community participation and local potential can also in one or another affect school management (Zakso et al., 2020).

1.2.3 Introduction of the National Education Standards in Malawi

For the first time, Malawi in the year 2015 came up with a set of National Education Standards (NES) to help the education sector improve the quality of learning, teaching, leadership and management of the schools. The standards clearly articulate the educational experiences and achievements which students and their paternities should expect their schools to deliver. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology Malawi (MoEST) introduced the NES to support the process of school improvement. The standards are organized into outcomes for students, teaching and learning process and leadership besides management categories. For each category, these standards are presented in 4 achievement levels: below minimum, meeting minimum, exceeding minimum and effective practice levels. A well- run school should be operating within the effective practice achievement level for all categories. Therefore, the NES acts as a measure for checking attainment of the norms and good practices in schools at both primary and secondary level.

Under the management section, there are 8 standards namely; partnership with parents and the community, staff supervision and development, staff deployment and management, care and welfare of students, access, equity and inclusion, management of buildings and facilities, management of material resources and financial management. One can be assessed on each standard on four different levels but the expected level for good school management is the last, level 4. At this level, management is deemed effective. This study therefore understands these eight standards under management and their effective practices. The set targets assist in informing the development of school improvement plans.

The NES were also placed to serve as a reference for the work of policymakers and other development partners in education as they strive towards achieving educational change and reforms across the country. And to realise that, they were set in accordance to the constitution of Malawi section 25 which demands that every person is entitled to education and that schools or institutions offering education should be maintained affording to official standards. This is in alignment to the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (MGDSII) as well as the National Education Sector Plan of 2008-2017.The standards were outlined while taking into account the goals and objectives of education in Malawi.

Specifying standards was supposed to enable accurate and comprehensive reporting on the quality of education, the Inspection and Advisory Services measure compliance using the standards and refer to it when reporting to Ministry of Education (MoE) the extent to which the standards are being implemented in schools (NES, 2015). As a matter of interest to the study, the study only focused on specific standards under management. In brief, these standards serve a purpose of aiding policy makers at national, divisional and district levels in education to be able to evaluate effectiveness and guide in reviewing and improving their practice.

Table 1.1: Summary of expected effective outcomes by the NES on management standards

Standard	Effective practices
1. Staff supervision and development	• Senior staff use the outcomes of staff appraisal and supervision when planning school-based in-service. • Feedback from lesson observations is used to check that advice given during supervision is implemented. • The head teacher and senior staff regularly analyse how well classes are doing. • The head teacher and senior staff have received training relevant to their management responsibilities.
2. Staff deployment and management	• Staff are deployed within the school in line with their training, experience and skills. • Senior managers work very effectively with staff at all levels to improve the quality of students' educational experiences
3. Effective management of behaviour	• Have high expectations of students' behaviour • Act authoritatively and decisively when necessary • Use a range of strategies, including praise, sanctions and rewards to motivate and manage students • Use positive approaches to managing behaviour and treat students with respect
4. Financial management	• The school has a history of financial stability and audits have not found any problems. • The community accounts for the funds it manages. • Schools with bank accounts meet all relevant financial regulations and have effective systems for monitoring and accounting for funds
5. Partnership with parents and the community	• Parents and community members are aware of the strengths of the school and its priorities for improvement and help to implement school plans. • The school communicates regularly with parents and the community about its activities, challenges and achievements. • The school is actively involved in community life and the community makes use of its facilities.
6. Care and welfare of students	• Students have a trusted member of staff to whom they can go with problems and receive advice. • The school has strong links with religious and community leaders, police, social workers and local NGOs and works with them to protect students, in and out of school and when carrying out domestic tasks. • The school records all incidents of bullying, violence and racial and sexual harassment, the action it has taken to deal with them and the eventual outcomes.
7. Access, equity and inclusion	• Both girls and boys have appropriate role models within the immediate community and can demonstrate the impact on their achievements. • The school identifies students affected by early pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other conditions, orphans, those living in child-headed households and those with special needs, and supports their learning and care. • The school involves all students in educational and co-curricular activities, wherever possible.

8. Management of buildings and facilities	• The school has implemented a water conservation policy and its environment minimizes runoff, wind erosion and deforestation.
	• The buildings and grounds are secure from intruders and are well cared for and maintained.
	• The head teacher's office, staffroom and library are well organized and used for their intended purposes.
	• Science laboratories meet national safety requirements and provide safe storage for chemicals and equipment.
	• The school has a garden which provides a context for developing farming skills and supplies products which are used to raise funds and/or improve students' nutrition.

The target audience for the standards include school managers with the aim of identifying areas of focus for them to fulfil education goals, supervision and the provision of advisory support, school self-evaluation, school performance review and inspection (NES, 2015). If Management fails to successfully implement the standards, the aim of the standards may not be successfully fulfilled and that brings out the desire to explore how managers are playing their role on it and hence the study.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Education management is the administration in charge of overseeing a school system. Education management aids in reaching targeted goals, improves resource management, boosts cost efficiency, and assures optimal authority and responsibility allocation. According to Okeke (2001), achieving educational goals is more dependent on efficient management and the proper utilization of workers with the requisite technical and professional abilities. According to a study in Nigeria by Nnorom (2020), goal and objective accomplishment are dependent on school administrators' quality management skills. Quality management also covers the development and execution of quality policies. The Malawi National Education Plan (NEP) (2013) advocated for the implementation and adherence to National Education Standards by all schools, the NEP supported the introduction and adherence to National Education Standards by all schools. Since the standards were introduced in 2015, schools have been functioning under the standards required in education provision and practice for

the past 8 years. However, while the standards try to support the efforts of all those who endeavour to improve students' educational attainment, there are always limitations. For example, Managers in a centralized education system lack the authority to carry out particular responsibilities decisively.

This contradicts the NES's management effectiveness criteria, which demand that managers be more decisive. So, how are the secondary school managers affected by the system to fulfil management standards in the NES? Against this background, the goal of this study is to delve into the first-hand experiences of secondary school administrators in implementing the NES under management.

1.3. Objectives

The main objective of the study was to explore the implementation of the NES under management within the centralized education system. The following specific objectives guided the study:

- To establish managers knowledge of the centralized management system and the National Education Standards under management.

- To explore the implications of a centralized management system in achieving effective practices for the NES under management.

- To ascertain factors affecting the achievement of effective practices on NES under management in the selected schools.

1.4. Justification for this Study

The findings of this study may bring awareness to the Ministry of Education on issues enhancing or impeding the achievement of the effective practice level of NES under the management category. School managers may be helped to find better ways of making sure that their schools can reach the required standards of managing secondary schools. The study may also help the Ministry of Education to deploy the decentralization policy to secondary schools if necessary, in order to improve governance. In addition to these, the study provides arguments for supporting the need to decentralize the secondary school subsector as envisioned in the key priority issues number 23 and 24 of the Final Malawi National Education Sector Plan (2020-2030).

1.5. Conceptual framework

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                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │    Hierarchy    │
                          └─────────────────┘
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┌──────────────┐         ┌──────────────────┐         ┌──────────────┐
│   People     │         │   Proper school  │         │  Chain of    │
│ interaction  │ ──────▶ │    management    │ ◀────── │  commands    │
│  to meet     │         │       and        │         │              │
│   goals      │         │   achievement    │         └──────────────┘
└──────────────┘         │   of national    │
                         │    education     │         ┌──────────────┐
┌──────────────┐         │  standards on    │         │ Clear        │
│ Both the     │ ──────▶ │   management     │ ◀────── │ division of  │
│ central and  │         └──────────────────┘         │ labour       │
│ local        │                                      └──────────────┘
│ authorities  │
│ can make     │                                      ┌──────────────┐
│ crucial      │         ┌──────────────┐             │ Meticulous   │
└──────────────┘         │  Promotion   │ ◀────────── │ record       │
                         │  based on    │             │ keeping and  │
                         │ performance &│             │ documentation│
                         │ qualification│             └──────────────┘
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Figure 1.1 The Conception Framework

Theories are there to give general explanations and direct users or researchers on research. Concepts obtained from theories are a foundation from which knowledge is constructed for a research study (Osanloo & Grant, 2014). The study adopted concepts from two theories since no specific theory was suitable for this study but several had aspects which could make sense to what this study was all about, two theories of management were used to guide the study. The first theory is the structural theory, which looks at the head of the organization having the central authoritative role (Daft, 2010).

Of great interest in this theory is the prominence of the official structure of the organization where managerial decisions are made through a rational process. An official structure also exists in the Malawian context. The structure is assumed to have 5organizational levels (Bush, 2020). The top level includes the national and local authorities while at the bottom are institutions or individuals. In Malawi, it is the government and its Ministerial roles at the top of the structure. Schools and school managers are placed at the very bottom of the structure.

The second theory is the Bureaucratic theory which was developed by Max Weber (18641920). This theory also focuses on the hierarchy of organizations, there are clear rules of governance. Of great interest are the strict rules and regulations, great autonomy of those on top, division of labour, meticulous record keeping and documentation which is usually used by inspectors when they visit schools to check progress and therefore also on checking the adherence to the National Education Standards. Bureaucracy also advocates the selection of employees based on performance and qualification which is not usually the case with head teachers managing secondary schools, they are simply appointed, and this may negatively affect the way secondary schools are managed and the achievement of the National Education Standards. The relationship displayed by the two theories combine and yield either proper school management or not which in the end, affect the outcomes produced. Both theories believe in having a structured hierarchy which runs from the top (central) to bottom (school administration) which also relates to a centralized education system.

1.6. Delineation of the study

Research delineations are important because they define parameters within which the research should be conducted. These become the boundaries of the study and sometimes

entails the way in which the findings may lack generalizability (Joyner et al., 2018). This study focused on qualified head teachers and deputy heads who are involved in managing conventional secondary schools in the South East Education Division of Malawi (SEED). The main focus being on only those who are qualified and have experience on the position.

1.7. Organization of the thesis report

Overall, this thesis is divided into 5 chapters. The first is the introduction which introduces the background of the study, aim of the study and objectives that guided the study. The background information is the foundation on which the problem statement, significance and justification of the study are anchored. On the other hand, a conceptual framework is also presented to show the theories that guided the study in relation to the research topic.

Chapter two: Literature Review. It instigates by consolidating key aspects of Centralization, education standards, experiences from selected countries and education management. It provides an overview of the Malawi's education system and shows how education decentralization has emerged and developed especially in primary schools over the years, the coming of education reforms and the introduction of the NES.

Chapter three: Methodologies. This chapter explains the research strategy and justifies the rationale for the choice of data collection techniques and interpretation methods. Additional information is given on the target population, the sample size, sampling techniques and finally the chapter explains the research dissemination strategy.

Chapter four: Findings and Discussions. This chapter is devoted towards outlining the findings of the research, analysis of the data collected and the discussion of the findings. It is therefore presented based on the findings from the field gathered through interviews and analysis of documents.

Lastly is chapter5 where summary, conclusions and recommendations laying foundation for future research based on the research findings are made.

1.8. Conclusion

In a centralized education system, the nation's central body has supremacy over schools and resources. The system provides control but also makes response to local education needs slow. Education management helps in policy implementation and transformation of schools which in Malawi is facilitated by the achievement of the NES introduced in the year 2015. The achievement of the NES however can be hindered if the school managers are limited or lacks autonomy as is the case with the centralized education system practiced in Malawian secondary schools. The study aimed at finding out how school managers exercise their duties in this system guided by a framework of bureaucratic and structural theories. The focus was on qualified head teachers and deputy head teachers within the South East Education Division.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0.   Introduction

There is no distrust that school management is considered an important factor for school effectiveness due to the changing context of education throughout the world (Connolly et al., 2019). This is evident through a series of research interest in school management. Additionally, this research adds to the knowledge of the role of school managers as they act as enablers between the education system and the success of students in accomplishing their education goals. Central to this research are education reforms that led to many countries not only Malawi to come up with set of benchmarks for achieving quality and effective education. In addition to setting standards, countries have a series of systems that they adopt in trying to accomplish these goals, like in most developed counties, there has been a shift from education centralization to decentralization (Hamal,2020). The meaning of successful school management however, is seen in relation to the context in which the managers' work, similarly to the systems mentioned above. Contextual factors could be located in the system level which affect action radius and prioritization of tasks that managers indulge in (Parshiadis, 2016). The Literature provided in this chapter provides an understanding education management in relation to the education systems they use to apprehend policies such as the NES. It also explicates the introduction of the NES to Malawi. Guiding the study were two theories of education management namely the bureaucratic theory and the structural theory. These theories claim that an organization's structure is hierarchical and that set goals are pursued in a reasonable way (Bush, 2020). Lastly the chapter shows the implications that emanate with managing schools in a centralized system together with factors that affect the practicality of National Education Standards and therefore shows the prominence of conducting this research.

2.1. Educational Management

Educational management is concerned with making things function in order to get the desired learning results (MOE, 2014). Planning, where a leader sets objective to meet specific goals; organizing, placing teachers and support staff in relative positions; mobilizing, ensuring that schools have appropriate facilities and resources; motivating, controlling, as well as directing; and ensuring proper supervision and evaluation are all aspects of good school management. Management is defined by Fayol in his book "General and Industrial Administration" as the ability to plan, organize, command, coordinate, and control. He continues, "Educational management is the art of getting things done within a given budget, on an established timeframe, with the assistance of others" (Ghani et al., 2017). As an academic discipline, it refers to the substantive body of knowledge, concepts, theories, and laws and their application to practice.

Education management is responsible for overseeing all aspects considered in academe (Sumadi & Ma'ruf, 2020). Education managers are typically not assigned to teach so that they focus only on school matters. Non-teaching responsibilities include processing payroll, maintaining school premises, and purchasing equipment. This necessitates planning, coordinating, and regulating an institution's operations by employing both human and material resources in order to successfully and efficiently carry out the duties of teaching and learning.

From different points of view, educational management is basically the implementation of management principles in the education sector, and the process consists of three basic functions: planning, implementing, and controlling. A manager uses these functions to achieve educational goals and objectives.

2.1.1 Importance of Educational Management

Educational management is fundamental in many ways. Understanding how to manage education enables managers to professionally operate educational institutions, which aids in decision-making and problem-solving (Prakash, 2015). It is also a method of creating institutions of excellence so that the vast majority of students can benefit from the education they receive in school. Furthermore, national policies focus on economic and cultural development through forecasting, planning, organizing, and controlling, and the best way to achieve such development is through human resource development.

To a greater extent, education is supposed to equip society with human resources who have specialized knowledge, attitudes, work ethics, and social, moral, and political values in order to sustain and enhance a nation's expected progress (Sumadi &Ma'ruf, 2020). Education tends to enable students to bring about desirable social change while also preserving desirable and positive aspects of the existing culture and fulfilling the stated roles of education and national developmental goals. As such there is a need to manage education and move beyond the traditional role of academics and its values and work towards bringing about qualitative changes in the educational system. Recognizing the importance of management has resulted in a lot of research on the subject.

Studies in many developed countries have focused much on the importance of management in increasing students' success. In Japan and the United States, for instance, education institutions face similar pressures that the business sector faces. There has been an increase in demand for good quality education by students and society, which has resulted in the advance of school management (Ates, 2014). In the United States, good management has been a measure of quality education. According to reports prepared based on international examinations and other studies in education, school managers and teachers are the most important factors for success compared to other factors (Ates, 2014).

It was discovered by (Prakash, 2015) that educational management is very imperative because knowing how to manage education helps managers to run educational institutions professionally which helps in decision-making and problem-solving. The study described management as a way of creating institutions of excellence so that a vast majority of students can benefit from the training they get from school. The study recommended that there is a need to manage education and move beyond the traditional role of academics and its values and work towards bringing about qualitative changes in the educational system.

In Europe, education institutions are run by the public sector, even in this circumstance, they also focus on the level of knowledge of school managers to accredit quality education. The United Kingdom and Sweden have quality assurance agencies that carry out evaluation functions based on quality school management (ESIB, 2002). These countries have a sturdy belief that management has a great impact on school achievement. Similarly, a Scandinavian study called the headmaster's ritual revealed that students who attend well managed schools in terms of having good working conditions, well established policies, and well-trained managers produce good student outcomes, it is said that their achievement improves by between 0.05 and 0.1 standard deviation (Bohlmark et al., 2016).

The study concluded that this was attributed to the quality school management. According to the UNESCO (2012) report, which highlighted indices of quality education, quality outcomes encompass knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and these are linked to intentional goals for education accredited to school management.

2.2. Education Standards

In education, the concept of standards includes both the description of what is to be learned, to be taught and the results. Standards serve as a basis for education reform as educators and policy makers respond to the call for desired outcomes. The standards provide a framework for teachers, administrators and policy makers in designing and selecting curricula, more importantly, the standards provide students, parents and communities with concrete expectations for quality education (Alismail & McGuire, 2015).

2.2.1. Importance of Education Standards

Education standards are used as reference for curricular development and education administration to realize education goals. They are used by different governments to plan, direct and improve quality education in accordance with the demands of changes of global life. For example; in Indonesia, Helda & Syahrani (2022) argued in their study that, the reason Indonesia amended the education standards and included them in the national constitution was to come up with minimum criteria to be followed in the education system in all jurisdictions of the Unitary State of the republic of Indonesia. Without standards, schools would not have goals to shoot for.

The education standards are also a basis of planning, implementing and supervising education. They form a harmonized and dignified way of conducting lessons, assessment and

supervision because all education institutions are mandated to use the same kind of standards since they act as the basis of what is to be achieved in the education discipline (Barton & Paul (2009). Schools therefore are the main actors of the education quality assurance, quality is no longer positioned as a burden, but as a necessity even as a lifestyle (Apandi et al., 2022).

Not only does education standards help policy makers and administrators, they also help teachers and students to have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed and focus on what they have to teach and learn. Education institutions can make their own self-evaluation with the standards (Great schools, 2015). Without standards, students, parents and teachers would not know what they should be learning and what they will be taste on.

A vast number of education reforms have been hoisted by education standards; therefore, standards have an important place in the education system, that is also why the knowledge of such standards and other education policies is important. Studies investigating knowledge of education standards have been tested in many developed countries but Search of literature failed to reveal knowledge of educators on education standards in Malawi, this research addressed this gap.

2.2.2. Knowledge of education standards

Success of education policies and standards is dependent on knowledge of the policies. A few available studies in other countries show that education standards are not known and understood by people implementing them.

A study done in the United States on knowledge of core state education standards for example; revealed that educators had moderate levels of knowledge of the standards. The standards were not understood due to multiple reasons from interpretation difficulties to newness of the

concepts. The study suggested that profession development would increase knowledge of the standards. The study expected that those holding administrative roles would have deeper knowledge and positive attitude towards the standards but the study did not show differences, all the educators regardless of their role had similar level of knowledge of the standards (Nadelson et al., 2014).

Another study by (Juarsar, et al., 2021) also revealed that principals lacked awareness of the national education standards. The schools did not understand how to implement the national education standards. The study had aimed at analysing the application of national education standards in elementary schools and it used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study also revealed problems that schools faced in implanting national education standards. Some of the problems include; inadequate finances to meet the requirements of the standards, lack of commitment from the government and school principals, lack of good school conditions such as infrastructure and lack of guidance and supervision by central government affected the implementation of the NES.

Similarly, a case study steered in New Guinea involving 95 teachers by (Tapo, 2004) showed that teacher's knowledge of education standards was deficient and that affected their commitment and enthusiasm on their work. The study found that teacher preparation and professional development are some of the factors that influenced their understanding of the NES. Other studies have looked into knowledge of different government policies on Education. These Studies show mixed findings. A study by Pima (2012) and (Mwale et al., 2010) exhibited that education stakeholders had limited knowledge of policies.

Other studies in Malawi by (Mbewe, 2021; and Muhonde et al., 2015) showed that study participants had no knowledge of the Special Needs Education policy in education. Implementation of a policy becomes a challenge when implementers have limited knowledge and understanding of the policy (Woff, et al., 1999). This was found factual in other studies

conducted in reviewing other Malawian education policies such as the repetition and pregnancy policy. It is still a need therefore to research into this area, there is still need to comprehend the level of understanding of the NES by school managers in Malawi.

2.4. Education Systems

All over the world, governments apply different approaches to organize and deliver their education system. The concept of education systems refers to the patterns of organization of education provision usually at national level (Mestry, 2017). Globally, education systems are set to enhance smooth running of education institutions, while these education systems can vary across dozens of design principles, at the two ends of the spectrum are central and decentral systems. A number of factors have contributed to the spread of knowledge of education systems and the choice to which people choose a certain type of education system depends on what and how they want to accomplish educational goals.

2.4.1. Centralized Education System and its implications

A school education system in its simplest terms is everything that goes into educating school students from the Ministry of Education level (or equivalent) to the school level. This includes laws, policies regulations, public funding, resource allocation, procedures, Human Resource, curriculum and pedagogy (Nunakhir, 2016). However, the field of education cannot be deemed important if it is not effective, so over the years many researchers have tried to identify what could be the best way to achieving effectiveness.

During the years, a well-known phenomenon of decentralization has become a certainty and has led to the abandonment of educational centralization in order to achieve effectiveness especially in governance (Tran,2014). Despite centralization of education receiving much critics, some countries remain centralized and that include Malawi in its secondary school

education. Studies on education decentralization and decentralization have brought insights on implications of managing schools in a centralized system.

In a study conducted in Canada by (Galway, 2013) in which he investigated the impact of centralization on local school governance, the findings revealed that centralization has a lot of impacts on school management including the fulfilment of NES. The study discovered that political and ideological interests run counter to mandates of the school in achieving school goals. This was evident through other numerous study findings across Canada (Sheppard et al., 2011). The study further revealed that centralization brought conflict between the government and school administrators over issues such as school consolidation. The study suggested that the Canadian government should allow elected school managers to have the right to begin a public discourse on local governance in education, perhaps that action would save a sinking ship than to quietly allow nature take its course in the hope that it will be spared (Galway, 2013). In another study, it was shown that in a centralized education system, the lower levels also called field offices cannot act on their initiative on specific matters, they have to refer most of their problems to higher levels (called headquarters) for decision making (Marume & Jubenkanda, 2016) this slows down decision making on crucial matters.

Another paper that tried to look at why decentralization Or Centralization in Pakistan, the findings corresponds to findings of Marume and Jubenkanda. Shah (2010) studied a number of motives of centralization of which one was found to be "power". Within the same context of power, Shah, (2010) explains that centralization may be regarded as concentration of power at the top level of an organization, he continued to say extreme cases of centralization are usually labelled as "one-man rule" in its findings, this affected how bottom managers worked because their voices were not heard.

A study conducted in Botswana on 'centralization of Education in Botswana' also indicated that in their centralized education system, the state acted as a sole provider, controller and regulator of almost everything. It was the state exercising authority through regulation of the constitution and individual behaviours by allocating resources to the public education system which in a way affected creativity and the ability of school managers to be resourceful in school (Yezo, 2013). The administrative authority at local or regional level was taken up by the central government.

In Cyprus, it was noted that centralization affected school budgets, the expected role of the central government to render financial support to schools was not accomplished, as a result, it was shown that a lot of schools struggled financially failing to accomplish some educational objectives due to lack of resources (Pantouri, 2013).

In Malawi, studies have been conducted specially to analyse the education decentralization policy. Findings show that the objectives of the policy were not achieved. It was believed that the decentralization process would result in increased participation of communities and quality would be amplified by better planning and implementation of educational authorities (N'gambi, 2011).

However, this has not been the case since studies have evidenced that the decentralization policy is not in practice as undesirable effects of centralization still manifest. Kafumbu (2017) analysed the decentralization policy in Malawi and found out that the Ministry officials were resistant to change and relinquish powers and responsibilities to local officials, as such local governments have not been able to make significant improvements in the quality of basic education. This was also reflected in the World Bank (2010) report where primary school completion rate was at 35% while attainment of basic literacy remained the lowest in the region.

N'gambi (2011) noted that schools in Malawi were understaffed, under resourced and overcrowded because of less allocation of staff and resources which remain centrally based. The availability of financial resources is a basic precondition for effective decentralization according to (Lameck, 2017) and without financial autonomy, it is a clear indication that a central system is dominant and a feasible proof of failure of the policy reform and that decentralization is compromised.

Amongst other implications of a centralized education, the ones listed in the studies above are that centralization affects staff retain, financial stability and school budgets, less power is given to local officials, brings conflict between the government and school administrators and the community does not fully participate in the activities of the school.

2.4.2. Implications of a Decentralized education system

Education decentralization policies are prevalent around the world (USAID). Whatever the motivation for education decentralization, decentralization also has implications on quality of education. A lot of studies have dwelled on the positive part of decentralization but, it has been discovered that the extent of decentralization may increase disparities in spending as well as educational outcomes.

Decentralization can also lead to confusion over education management, causing conflicting decisions or failure to carry out functions with adverse effects on quality and efficiency. However, if decentralization is designed well, USAID found that it has potential to improve service delivery and accountability in schools. Citizens have adequate voice in making their preferences well known to the government.

2.5. Factors that Affect achievement of educational policies

This section presents the factors that have been identified by different scholars to have an effect on achieving education policies and likely to affect NES. The challenges include; lack of management training, lack of professional experience, lack of finances, organizational culture and teaching background.

2.5.1. Lack of Management training

Studies have shown that a number of factors affect the achievement of NES, for instance lack of training on the job. A study by Ivancevich (2007) discovered that management training provided skills and abilities of school managers and improved the management abilities of leaders. It was noted that when leaders were trained, they were able to provide proper direction to move followers to achieve goals that they developed and that improved their schools. Through training, a school head obtained a variety of management styles, practices and abilities that enhanced their capabilities in carrying out their duties. In agreement, it was also assumed that training related to theoretical and practical abilities helped managers to handle changing management that is conferring to a study by (Winingsih & Sulistiono, 2020).

2.5.2. Work experience

Another factor that possibly can affect achievement of NES is work experience. Winingisih, et al., (2020) studied factors that affect principal's leadership and its impact on achievement of learning outcomes and it was found that, the length of time someone worked both in years and the type of work a person is engaged in affected outcomes, for example; those with little experience failed to have a proper plan set to achieving set goals. As it was also argued by (Johnson, 2014) that work experience can raise a person's potential because one can form the knowledge, skills, techniques and ways of carrying out a job (Johnson, 2014).

In the context of a school headship, work experience was thought to influence the level of mastery of knowledge and skills in managing schools (Widiana et al., 2012). Work experience may as well cast out doubt because the work becomes something that has been carried out before, the direction is already known. Kotur & Anbazhagan, (2014) also suggested a positive influence of work experience on competency of school managers.

2.5.3. Inadequate funding

In Indonesia, Setiadi, (2020) was interested to explore the achievement of NES of Senior High School of Rural area. The study was steered because it was seen that the quality of education units between state senior high schools and private schools were different especially in the rural area. The findings of the study revealed that it was hard effort for the rural private schools to achieve NES because of inadequate monetary support from the government while the private schools supported themselves. Due to limited financial income and support, the schools had problems paying teachers and other staff and the study recommended that central education offices needed to give more attention in supporting schools with adequate finances in order to help achieving the National Education Standards and school quality.

2.5.4. Organization Culture

Among other factors, it was also discovered by Bata (2020) that Organizational culture is one of the most relevant components of an organization whether privately or publicly owned. In his study (Bata, 2020) supposed that personality of an organization assists in guiding the thoughts and actions of its members at work, not only that, it is central to the beliefs, values and attitudes which are defined by the organization. People eventually get used to the norms and behaviours of an organization and this might positively or negatively affect the way management of and education institution and the fulfilment of set standards.

2.6. Conclusion

The literature has revealed writings on the concepts of education management, centralization, National Education Standards, the implications of a centralized education system on achieving NES as well as disclosed some factors that may affect effective practices of school managers in fulfilling education policies such as the NES which include management training among others.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology, the approach and techniques that were employed in carrying out the research. It discusses and explains the research paradigm, the research design, study setting, the research subjects and size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, reliability and validity of information, trustworthiness, ethical consideration, data management and data analysis procedures. Lastly, it explains how the information instituted from the study will be disseminated.

3.1. Research paradigm

The research adopted the interpretivism paradigm. Interpretivists believe in different multiple realities and that these realities are approached from different angles by different people (Rehman, 2016). The concept of interpretivism involves researchers interpreting elements of the study thus integrating human interests into a study. It brings a deep understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context instead of treating populations as equal (Creswell et al, 2007). Correspondingly, Simonsen et al. (2008); Trowler et al., (2012) and Bhattacherjje (2012) agrees that interpretivism also aims at including richness in the insights gathered in research rather than generalizing variables and factors.

The nature of this study required an in-depth understanding of the experiences of head teachers in managing secondary schools while putting in mind the requirement to achieve the NES, hence the need for an interpretivism paradigm.

The researcher therefore opted to go into the natural setting, the workplace of these managers to obtain primary source information on how they are doing. Although the paradigm has weaknesses the researcher still adopted it because data collected through interpretivism is associated with high levels of trustworthiness since it is collected primarily from the source and therefore it is honest and can be trusted (Gunawan, 2015).

3.2. Research approach and design

The study employed a qualitative research approach which supposed to understand the in depth experiences of head teachers working in centralized education system from their own perspectives. Qualitative research provides a chance for researchers to get data from lived or felt experiences depending on how people make sense out of their lives (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Since the head teachers were approached in their natural setting/work place and qualitative data was collected in form of words to find out a better understanding of the problem from the very people involved. The approach was also suitable because, Context in qualitative research is never controlled or manipulated by the researcher, for example all the researcher did in this was to interact extensively and intimately with participants during the study as it was inscribed by (Mills & Gay, 2016). According to Creswell (2012), qualitative approaches also enables the researcher to obtain complicated details of a situation. These include feelings, thoughts and emotions that are difficult to extract or obtain through other conventional research methods, such as social survey methods.

While using a qualitative approach the study also chose to work using a case study design. A case study is a detailed study of one or (at most) a few individuals or social units such as a classroom, school or neighbourhood (Frankael, 2015). It can also be a study of an event, an activity or an ongoing process.

Interviews with head teachers and deputy head teachers of different secondary schools were conducted hence making it a case of managers from different secondary schools. The study had multiple cases since more than one school was involved and according to Mills and Gay (2016) having a particular phenomenon or setting providing an understanding of a problem different to other settings qualifies to be an individual case.

3.3. Setting

The research was conducted in secondary schools found in SEED, particularly Zomba district. A city located in the southern region of Malawi, in the shire Highlands. The need to conduct qualitative research in a well-defined location is critical, the district has a very good background of education and has a lot of secondary schools than many districts, which did not limit the researcher from finding head teachers from the schools to work with. Demographically, both urban and rural schools were sampled. The consideration also came out because of resources for mobility and time for the study.

3.4. Sample Size and sampling techniques

A sample is described as a group on which a researcher can obtain information (Fraenkel; Wallen & Hyun, 2015). What is obtained can be applied to a larger group which has characteristics common to the sample. The sample size for this study was 20 participants and comprised of 10 head teachers and 10 deputy head teachers from ten secondary schools. The selected individuals were those who have worked for at least a year and were qualified for the post of the head teacher or deputy headteacher, meaning they had an education diploma or degree level. The assumption was that qualified head and deputy head teachers have a better understanding of the education system and know their roles and policies that guide the education system in Malawi. This therefore entails that the sample was purposively sampled.

Ten schools were visited and labelled by numbers in descending order according to which one of them was visited first for easy identification. Interviews were conducted with school managers and documents like log books, punishment books, circulation files, school management handbook, discipline file, meeting minutes and time books that provided insight to the study were checked. The data, therefore constituted twenty interviews as two managers were interviewed per school. Table 3.1. Provides the summary for participants.

Table 3.1: Profile of participants

Participant	Sex	Qualification	Years of Experience as Head/Deputy head teacher
HT1	Male	Diploma	2
HT2	Female	Master's Degree	6
HT3	Male	Degree	3
HT4	Male	Degree	2
HT5	Male	Diploma	10
HT6	Female	Degree	4
HT7	Male	Master's Degree	8
HT8	Male	Master's Degree	12
HT9	Male	Degree	1
HT10	Male	Degree	5
DP1	Female	Diploma	3
DP2	Female	Degree	2
DP3	Male	Degree	11
DP4	Male	Diploma	3
DP5	Male	Diploma	2
DP6	Male	Degree	10
DP7	Male	Degree	5
DP8	Male	Degree	9
DP9	Male	Degree	4
DP10	Female	Degree	4

Coming up with the number of participants was done by selecting who best suited the study as such there were techniques used to sample out the clutch. Choosing or selecting several individuals from a population is referred to as sampling (Frankael, 2015). This can be done by using several techniques which include: using clusters, simple random sampling, convenience and stratified sampling just to mention a few, but for this study, the researcher used purposive-random sampling where some head teachers and deputy heads with required qualifications were identified in different secondary schools. However, because of the large number of secondary schools in the division, the schools were randomly selected to come up with a sample size of 20 participants. Corresponding to Frankael (2015) the sample was a homogenous sample since all the members possessed similar characteristics.

3.5. Data collection Methods and Instruments

Data was collected using face-to-face interviews and interview guides were used (See appendix1). An interview is a data collection method in which an interviewer (the researcher or someone working for the researcher) asks questions of an interviewee who provides data. Hardy, (2008) defined interviews as a conversation for gathering information. Interviews according to Hardy are categorized into four types, structured, semi-structured, unstructured and focus group interviews. This being a qualitative research, the researcher used semi structured interviews because they can systematically probe for in-depth information from participants. The interview contained open-ended questions, this kind of interview is also called a depth interview because it collects in-depth information about the participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivation and feelings about a topic (Johnson and Christensen, 2014). The best part of an interview is that it allows the researcher to freely use probes to obtain clarity or additional information for example; by repeating questions.

The researcher was aware of the weakness of interviews with open ended questions one of them being that, it leads to collection of huge amount of data which may not be related to the study, in order to overcome this the researcher made sure that focus was put to only specific phenomenon that helped in answering the research objectives. The collection tools used were interview guides (refer to appendix 1). An interview guide is a list of questions that a researcher plans to cover in an interview (Cresswell & Clark, 2007). More data was collected by checking documents and a document analysis checklist was used (see appendix2).

3.6. Data Management Methods

Data management describes the organization, storage, preservation and sharing of data collected in a research project (Gay & Mills, 2016). The researcher was able to manage the data by consistently naming data files and conversations, dating all recordings and storing the recordings in different gadgets. It was transcribed and kept in soft copies and hard copies in case one gets lost or damaged. The researcher was aware that good data management helps to prevent errors, saves time and increases the quality for analyses.

3.7. Research Dissemination strategy

The findings of the research will be made sure that it gets to the people who can make use of them so that the benefit of the research is maximized without delay. Marin-Gonzalez et al., (2016) defines data dissemination as spreading the findings or outputs of research to relevant audiences, this helps stakeholders to have access to results and conclusions that can help them make decisions. The findings from the research ought to be made known by putting the research report in Mzuzu University (MZUNI) library where it will be accessed electronically or manually. Lastly, the printed thesis document will be shared with all schools that took part in the study.

3.8. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the research was achieved through dependability, credibility, transferability, conformability and validity. These makes sure that errors are minimized (Check, 2017). To ensure feasibility, a pilot study was conducted before the main data was collected. Frankael, (2015) described a pilot study as a small-scale trial of the proposed procedures. This trial helped the researcher to detect any hitches with the data collection tools and they were improved before the study was properly carried out. So, after the pilot, the interview questions were adjusted and more were added because the researcher realized that one objective was not fully being answered. This is an assurance that the data that was collected yielded accurate, credible and dependable data (Check, 2007).

The data collected was triangulated by using a different source of data, so apart from the use of interviews the same information was checked in documents that are filed in the head teachers offices for example, circulation files which contain circular documents and policies that schools need to follow, the discipline file which keeps records of past discipline issues and how they were handled as well as the log book where serious offences are recorded among other documents, this enhanced validity and reliability of the information.

Transcription of the data collected was done word by word "verbatim" as advised by Creswell (2014). A file of all written transcripts by each participant was created and shared with the researcher's supervisor. Rechecking the data with the supervisor enhanced confirmability and acceptance of the data even by other people, the process of rechecking was done throughout the whole research journey. See appendix 3. Before the data collection even began, the researcher made sure that the objectives were well- planned and the researcher prepared for the interview thoroughly.

The recording gadget was tested to prevent failures and disruptions during the interviews. The researcher was well conversant about the topic and ready to answer any questions from participants, physically and mentally ready to conduct the interviews, increasing the level of confidence also increased confirm ability of the study findings.

Lastly, member checking was done to ensure validity and credibility of the data, the researcher went back to the participants after data collection to confirm recorded data versus what was said during interviews. The only challenge that was encountered was time, other schools were far that the researcher could not manage to return for member checking so checking was done after the interviews on the same day. Just to confirm the data as well, the researcher had a recorder which was used to record the interviews so that the recordings could also verify what was said and written down during interviews.

3.9. Data analysis techniques

Data collected was transcribed word by word by listening to the recorded audio. The transcripts were later crosschecked with field notes from the interviews, then the data was coded guided by research objectives without moving out of the guiding conceptual framework. Coding is the process of grouping evidence and labelling ideas so that they reflect an increasingly broader perspective (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The codes were then grouped into themes that could be easily interpreted. The software package that was used in analysing the data was NVivo. NVivo is a software that helps researchers organize and analyse nonnumeric data or unstructured data. The software allows users to classify, sort, and arrange information, examine the relationship in the data and combine analysis, linking, shaping and modelling, it is a multi-document view which can help in viewing data transcribed from interviews (Freitas et al., 2018).

Not only did the researcher depend on the software rather data was also analysed manually by the researcher, the researcher was the interpreter of the findings (Witell et al., 2013). After data was transcribed word by word, Coding was done guided by the patterns that came out of the data answering the research objectives. The researcher made sure that the study remained bound by the conceptual framework. During this process the researcher explored more literature, came up with interesting issues, and repetitive issues mentioned by respondents led to coding and the codes were grouped into various groups which formed sub-themes. The subthemes were regrouped to form themes. The study came up with themes that were predetermined, derived from the conceptual framework and new themes that emerged from the respondents. The predetermined and generated themes were the basis of arguments in the discussions and conclusions drawn.

3.1.0. Ethical considerations

The researcher sought ethical clearance from Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC). A consent letter to collect data was given by the university (see appendix 4). Permission was also sought from the Education Division office before going to schools (Appendix 5) and permission was granted, the researcher was given a permission letter to go ahead with data collection (Appendix 6). The head teachers were asked for consent before involving them (see appendix7). Alaafin, (2018) emphasized the need of getting informed consent and voluntary research participation of participants, Alaafin utters that participants should be adequately informed about the research and should be allowed to have the power and freedom to decide whether to participate or decline. This is also in agreement with Cohen et al. (2011) who emphasizes that access and acceptance are vital aspects of data collection. Knowing this, the participants were well informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any given time of their choice. Respondents were assured of confidentiality of the data; no names and identity of participants were to be revealed anywhere.

Also, taking into consideration that the research was done when the world was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher made sure that all preventive measures set by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health Malawi were being adhered to. All participants were provided with hand sanitizers before handling any tool and face masks were given to be used during interviews and any other meetings. This made sure that participants were protected and the spread of the virus was minimized. Finally, the researcher did not forget to perform formal exit procedures after the process of data collection was completed (Ndengu 2012; Terell, 2012).

3.11. Conclusion

The chapter has described the methodologies used by the researcher before data was collected, during data collection and how the data was managed and interpreted. A qualitative approach which followed a case study design and interpretive paradigm, open ended questions were used to collect data and data analysis was thematic. A total of twenty participants were interviewed. Below are the findings and discussions of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the results, interpretation and discussion of the findings. The study was set to explore the secondary school managers' experience of managing schools in a centralized system. The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To establish managers knowledge of the centralized management system and the National Education Standards under management.

- To explore the implications of a centralized management system in achieving effective practices for the NES under management.

- To ascertain factors affecting the achievement of effective practices on NES under management in the selected schools.

According to Cohen et al, (2011), data can be presented in five different ways, firstly by using data collection instruments, by individual participants, by groups of people, by issues, and sometimes by research questions/objectives. This study will present its findings by its objectives because this approach draws together all relevant data for exact issues of concern to the researcher, it helps to provide information more coherently irrespective of the methods used when collecting data and without looking at who provided the information. Also, it makes sure that the researcher returns to driving concerns of the research, therefore, answering the research questions that arose at the early stages of research.

Indeed, it was not in the interest of the researcher to bring these cases as individuals or separate entities but to look at issues across multiple cases hence the choice of going objective by objective. Findings under each objective are presented and discussed before proceeding to the next objective. The participants were given codes, DP (1-10) for Deputy headteachers and HT (1-10) for head teachers.

4.1. Findings and discussion

4.1.1 Knowledge of the education system and the NES on management

This objective aimed at finding out secondary school managers' knowledge of the management system they follow when managing secondary schools as well as checking their knowledge of the NES, expressly standards under management. Data for this objective came from interviews. The findings on the school management understanding of the system are presented and discussed first before the findings on knowledge of the NES.

4.1.1.1. School managers' understanding of a centralized management system

Literature describes a centralized education system in different ways but this study adopted one that says a central planning administration is one where by the state acts as the sole provider, controller and regulator of education (Marume & Jubenkanda; 2016, Yezo 2013; & Yazdi, 2013). Key concepts in this description are that the government makes decisions, controls all aspects of education, decides what resources to be used and assumes the needs for students and the community. The findings show that the managers have knowledge of the management system and the results are discussed under the following predetermined themes which came from the conceptual framework. These were: single point concentration of power, hierarchical top bottom directives, Meticulous record keeping used for inspection, strict rules and regulations, determined division of labour and job descriptions of employees. By means of the themes, here is what the study found.

The Single-point concentration of power

The participants described the system that they work in as one that gives managerial powers and responsibilities related to education in one hand, in other words, a central authoritative role.

More than ten participants out of the twenty described the system mostly as of this kind, they uttered that they work under policies which are formulated by the government and all they have to do is implement them. Decision-making process resides in the hands of a few people within the organization. Asked to describe the system, this is what some of them had to say:

> "*Everything is done by the ministry, they send us teachers, learners and provides us with money to run the schools the ministry also controls all the monitoring and inspection, they come and inspect our schools when they want, without proper communication and they rate us based on the NES and curriculum that all schools follow in Malawi despite having different type of students and without considering the context and location of schools, the monitoring that happens at school level does not even count and sometimes it is demotivating and we stop doing them*" DP10

Another responded and added on the issue of finances, this is one of the subjects that emerged most. Almost every manager had mentioned the issue of money in their explanations, money is controlled by central government and not by local governments they said. Adding to what DP10 said another respondent also narrated that:

> "*There have been attempts to decentralize the system but I can say it has failed because right now we still receive our funds from the central government while our friends in primary school their funds come from the local government*"HT6.

Also,

> '*In some years they give us money and tell us what to do with it not us deciding what to do with the funding. The government controls the activities of the school*' HT 8 Apart from sentiments that the top officials are dominant, the findings also revealed that centralization is as well practiced at the school level. The head teacher is taken as the centre of everything, during the interviews deputy head teachers explained that they fail to act upon some issues because the head teacher need to approve first, for example, a deputy head teacher cannot suspend a learner without the head teachers

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recommendation and approval despite the deputy being the chairperson of the discipline committee.

In their opinion, if one is given a job to do, the one giving the job need to trust that the people given the job are capable, and they should be allowed to do their job. This over-dependence on head teachers was also shown when the deputy head teachers were asked if they have copies of policies and the NES in their office and they responded by saying:

> *"zimenezo koma ahead, go and ask the head teacher' Meaning "those are for the Head teacher, go and ask the head teacher'.* DP1

> *"Mm no we just see some of them pasted in the head teacher's office but we are never told what they mean and what is required of us"* DP7

The findings of this study talk to the findings of a study by Sancar, (2012) which was conducted in North Cyprus which revealed teacher's perceptions of school managers in centralized education system. Teachers described managers in a centralized system as initiators who are expected to be the first in shaping schools and others follow, a typical example of instructional leadership and centralization. Some of the perceptions were that managers in a centralised system depended much on orders, they tell people what to do without question, another perception was the overdependence of records, the managers referred to reserved records in trying to make future decisions also, the managers were very strict. In the same way, managers in bureaucracy are taken as the ones in control of the system of education, completely the power and abilities to perform different duties are vested in them (Yezo, 2013).

Hierarchical top bottom directives

The respondents called the directives and instructions they receive from above as mandates. A mandate is an official order or commission to do things. In education, these can be authorities given to carry out certain policies regardless of the ideas of the one mandated to do the job. In their answers, here is what they said:

"We are simply mandated to do what we are told; we are told everything is policy', '*so do you question a policy? No, you don't*" said DP5.

It was interesting to hear from one manager who figuratively described his work in the education sector as a bodyguard. You do not question the system; you simply do the work that you are hired for. In his words he said:

> *'We are simply taken out of the classroom, brought to the office to implement policies that's all we know.' 'Working as a manager at school is simply working as a board guard for a King who even when you see a cockroach in food you always shut down because that is none of your business.'* DP5

Eight of the schools visited reported that they follow this type of management. The results are not new, top-bottom management has been a common practice in academic circles, studies have been conducted to rethink this approach, for example; Martinichi, (2016) study found that this approach's practical advantage for the management team lies in control, it is relatively easy to evaluate whether plans have been fulfilled or not because the processes and work are well known. On the other hand, the same study also came out with slightly different views from participants who said the approach can be ambiguous for the manager who is supposed to think through all details of a project and thus advocated for a balanced top-down, down-top approach.

Meticulous keeping of records used for inspection

It has proved that it is a culture of many schools to exercise record keeping. From the findings of the study, managers said that they make sure that teachers keep important records. They have files used to keep information for future reference, for example; the keeping of discipline files for both teachers and learners, schemes of work, registers as they believe that records are a part of the teaching profession's identity.

When they were asked to show these kinds of documents, they were indeed able to bring out the files of registers, discipline files and circulation files just to mention but a few. They did not hesitate and one participant said: *"Updating of school records is part of our job"* DP2

In preparation for classes teachers make sure that they make plans for their lessons, in reference to the syllabi. They scheme their work for the entire academic year and make sure that it is followed to guide teaching. In the same way, school managers are required to keep records of staff members, students, policy documents and plans of school activities. This came to be another description of the system that school managers revealed. They added to say that they also use some of these documents in times of interviews.

In relation to the conceptual framework guiding the study, keeping of records in the education sector helps in checking performance and they are used in conducting promotions and appraisals as it shows competence. Availability of one's records during inspection helps inspectors to check the consistency of what a person is capable of doing.

In the process of decentralization of education management in Southern Asia, keeping of records was carried over from centralization because it was seen as one of the important aspects of strategic education planning and improvement (Southern Asian Ministry of Education Organization Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology, 2012).

Strict rules and regulations

The study revealed that the schools that were visited followed strict rules and regulations. The managers elucidated that the system requires them to have rules and regulations. They had copies of school rules and one of the rules they follow is that all students should reach school in time. To make sure that this is achieved, some schools demonstrated to have punctuality books where students indicate the time, they reach school when they are late, the same applied to teachers.

The Schools made sure that students were putting on the right uniform and abide by general set rules and regulations set by the schools. It is also believed that everything that the students must do in school should be written down by the administration. This proved to be right because most schools displayed school rules on their notice boards and had copies of school rules signed by all students kept in files by the managers in their office.

In Malawi, being a student does not provide an excuse for one to disobey the rules of the public, even the unawareness of the law does not provide an excuse for not being charged with a crime, therefore schools make sure that all rules are being followed, misconducts may lead to students losing their place in school or other kinds of punishments. In centralized education systems, it is believed that the academic excellence of students is mainly brought about by respect and obedience to the rules and regulations which are established by the school.

The way the managers described the system is ironically the right way of describing the centralized system according to studies done by Acher (2017) and Sikayile, (2011). As illustrated by Archer, (2017) a centralized curriculum is the one with uniform mode of certifying learners, all textbooks which would be used in the schools are checked by the Ministry of Education through the curriculum and there is compliance with the national syllabus. The certification process is determined and controlled at the national level. This is also the case with Ghana and other countries in the sub-Saharan region as Zimbabwe and Malawi (Archer, 2017).

Having managers describe the secondary education system in Malawi as in the above themes articulates that the system is centralized. By implying what Sikayile (2011) found in Zambia, there is no ideal version of proper decentralization despite other things done at the school level because, the implementation of official policies remains a blueprint of what is supposed to be done. Policies are defined as influencers of the field of education, they are a collection

of rules and laws that govern the education system and therefore they are there to be trailed as long as one works under the guidance and legislation of the government.

However, there were other managers that described the education system different from the above themes. They believe the system is not an immobile system. Below is how they describing the system.

Joined forces Approach

On the above theme, a few managers had a different perception of the system, they reported that sometimes, they make their own decisions at school level, and that implies decentralization. They do not sorely depend on a single approach but the systems are mutually used. One of them said:

> *"Teachers also bring in their initiatives as long as they are helping to bring better results. Some teachers are also gifted and have their own skills which we allow them to bring on board"* he continued to say, *"there are other decisions that as a school we are able to make on our own but there are other things that we have to take orders from above"* HT9

The system might be partially decentralized but according to what came out of the manager's understandings, it shows that the system is highly centralized. Secondary school managers showed overdependence on the Ministry of Education.

4.1.1.2. Knowledge of the NES under Management

The managers were asked to state what they knew about the management standards and the managers demonstrated lack of knowledge of the standards. The management standards focus on the roles of school managers and the practical actions schools take to ensure that students have a positive school experience. These include Partnership with parents and the community, staff supervision and management, access, equity and inclusion, management of buildings and facilities as well as material resources and financial management.

When the school managers were asked to explain their understanding of the NES under management, only one-third (7 out of 20) were able to describe the standards. They expressed their sentiments in various ways, but most of them focused on the general concept of the national education standards as a whole. Table 4.1 gives an overview of the participant's understanding of the NES under management as they responded to what is required of them to achieve the effective practice Level on National Education Standards under management.

Table 4.1: School managers' understanding of Effective Practice Level for NES under management

Participants code	Responses
HT1	I know them just in general not specific for management
DP1	Yes, though I don't know them well
HT2	YES, I heard. Of course, what I heard is that they help us to measure our performance, they are on how we can achieve success in our schools, how we can improve, mmm even our infrastructure, how to deal with our teachers' cooperation, but mmm just on management am not sure.
DP2	Updating of school records, supervision
HT3	As a manager the NES requires me to use it as a guide in running the school, it helps us assess how we are performing. These are like guidelines in which schools are supposed to operate on. They are expected set limits whereby schools should operate within those guidelines; they assist the schools to make sure that they perform."
DP3	We should be able to assess the calibre of the qualifications of our teachers. We need to communicate with the division office and also make sure that teachers and learners are well disciplined
HT4	as a manager our major role is supervisory role, we supervise the implementation of the National Education Standards, checking if teaching and learning is in line with the curriculum, the standards emphasize the need for evidence of teaching as such the need for records.
DP4	As a manager, my major role is to supervise the implementation and delivery of the curriculum, I do this by checking how teaching and learning is taking place and we record on supervision forms since everything we do requires evidence
HT5	It a measure of education in Malawi whereby schools have to follow
DP5	No, I don't know anything, I have heard but they are not clear, am not sure
HT6	We are Required to take care of a number of issues on how the schools should be run.
DP6	I think we are supposed to care for the students and make sure that they are well behaved, check schemes of work and conduct meetings with head of departments
HT7	I don't know what management standards mean.

DP7	We look at the discipline of students and teachers and making sure that the teaching and learning is done smoothly.
HT8	managers should know how to keep records and how to build good relationships with the students and community
DP8	Work hand in hand with the head teacher, when we are asked to attend meetings, we should go on their behalf.
HT9	Monitoring lessons
DP9	we make sure that we are chairing the discipline committee, encourage teachers to write lesson plans and schemes of work
HT10	we forget or sometimes overlook what we are supposed to do
DP10	Yes, as deputies we are head of academics, and make sure that learning and teaching as well as assessment is being done in good time.

Out of the eight National Education standards under school management, only three were repeatedly mentioned by the school managers interviewed. Firstly, all the 20 participants agreed to have heard of the NES but when they were asked to explain what the NES on management were, they could only give a general description of the whole policy document and not specifically the NES on management as shown in the extracts indicated in the Table 4.1. Some of them gave the meaning of NES and its aims, but could not specifically explain what they are required to do as managers to realize the effective practices under management. Out of the many responses, the researcher was able to come up with themes that described the NES under management, this was made possible by thematic analysis which allowed the researcher to make sense of the large amounts of information so that important responses to research emerged, and these were:

Supervision of staff

A smaller number of the participants (3 out of 20) were able to know that under management they need to develop and supervise staff, a study that was done by Ismail (2017) explained that staff supervision is one of the most important supports for educational system and education professional development. Supervision enhances innovations among educators and initiates important changes that embraces industrial revolution. In the education sector it is a

way of checking the need for skill development and an integral part of education management (Ismail, 2017).

Supervision is one of a common feature of education policies in many developing countries, globally education is positioned as a socially progressive phenomenon that promotes economic growth and productivity (Rowell, 2020), as such education policies becomes inevitably bound to development for example, there is Teacher Evaluation System Policy in Mexico which aims at building highly skilled professional educators (Mancera & Schmelkes, 2010), this depends highly on supervision.

However, according to a study by Ahmad and Saefurrohman (2020) conducted in Indonesia, it was found that supervision is not always effective when it is not managed properly, it has to start from planning, implementation, follow-up and feedback activities of which in most cases some of these activities are skipped.

Good relationships with students and parents

In addition to supervision, the managers also mentioned the role of building good relationships with the students and the community. As managers, they make sure that there are support groups for students for example the student's council and Parents Teachers Association (PTA). The managers make sure that the community develop ownership spirit and ensures that the school is well taken care of. In their remarks, the managers mentioned that:

> *"The student's body and class monitors act as a link between teachers and students their parents are in the PTA committee and they are the ones helping us in paying for other support staff for example the assistant librarian"* HT4

Another manager also said that one of the things that help their school to perform better is the fact that their relationship with learner's and parents is very good:

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> *"We have a good relationship with the PTA which assist the school in many areas. They give awards to motivate teachers, as well as providing resources to support staff and this makes our staff hard working"* HT3

The annotations given by the managers shows that the managers have knowledge of Education standard 19 "*partnership with parents and the community"* which is one of the standards under school management. Thus, the NES indicates that if a school shows evidence of meetings and discussions with parents, availability of minutes of the governing body meetings, the community making significant contribution to fundraising to the school, then there is partnership between the school, parents and the community. These results therefore show that some of the managers know the standards falling under management in the NES.

Management of finances

School managers were also quick to mention the role of managing finances, from most of them it came as a complaint, according to their experience, the government does not sanction them the freedom to take full hold of finances for smooth running of school activities. Rendering to Ghani (2017), the art of education management dwells on getting work done within a given budget. They handle salaries of support staff, maintain school buildings and equipment, purchase teaching and learning materials for example lab equipment which all come back to the need for a manager to know and practice financial management. Out of the eight standards under management, only the ones mentioned in the elaborated themes were revealed.

As cited in the previous statements, the roles stated are in line with NES 19 and 20 which are under management (NES, 2015). It was interesting to note that the NES document has been in schools for some time but out of the 20 participants only three were confident to mention some standards under management though without proper phrasing, the rest struggled to mention them, this indicates lack of familiarity with the standards.

If the managers are not familiar with these standards, how are they performing their roles as managers and how do they make sure that these are being practiced? These are questions that may be considered for future studies but according to this study, it has been noted that there is lack of knowledge and understanding of the NES. The researcher deliberates it could be nice for the ministry to invest time and find out if managers understand the policies for effectiveness because it appears managers in secondary schools lack understanding of the NES.

The study exhibited that managers only know a few of the different eight standards that are under management. The only standards that came out clear were financial management, supervision and partnership with the community. The findings of the study concur with the findings of another study conducted in Malawian private secondary schools by Mbewe (2021).

According to Mbewe, private school teachers and managers lacked knowledge of the Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines. Managers have shown that they do not know what they are supposed to do for effective school management nor do they understand the documents that guide them.

Lack of knowledge of policy indicates that policies cannot yield its effective purposes. The same was true with policies like the teacher-pupil ratio policy in Malawi, it was set but did not become the practice as it was the wish of MoEST (Wolf et, al., 1999).

4.1.2. Implication of Centralization on management and achievement of effective practices of the NES under management.

Data for this objective came from both interviews and documents analysed. This section presents and discusses implications of a centralized education system on management of the

schools according to the school's managers who participated in this study. Eight thematic areas were mentioned.

4.1.2.1 Minimizes interaction between schools and the community

In the new paradigm, schools and the wider community coexist, there is need for openness to external needs of the community, the willingness of schools to adapt to the needs people is vital. The findings of the study found out that this is hindered in the system that is in practice, here are what the managers said:

> "*The community think that learners become the responsibility of teachers and head teachers the moment they leave home, they do not care what happens at school and they do not care to follow up*" HT3 reported.

He added and said:
> "*mostly we display information only for students, for the community we don't, this is because the community we are in has no interest in the affairs of the school, sometimes it behaves like they don't want the school, we have a challenge with the community, the school came as an island, a stranger, it looks like the school was imposed on them.*"

Another participant also had to say the following about the community and guardians
> "*We work with a community that does not know the roles of a manager, so when a leader is trying to impose sanctions of leadership like what the policies say, people tend to resist. This includes the parents; we do not work as partners but enemies.*" DP9

Furthermore, HT5 added by saying:
> "*As head teachers we are not spokespersons for the government so displaying information for the community without getting consent from the top bosses is a violation of our profession, otherwise we only give out information when we are allowed to by the division manager. Of course, the standards require us to do so e.g. displaying information on finances but we feel for security reasons it might attract the attention of thieves*" .HT5

The above statements are an indication of how the relationship between parents and managers is in the secondary schools. Schools' impression is that, it is a waste of time to call for parental meetings because most parents are not interested to attend. On the other hand, most schools do not display information for access to the community because they assume nobody will

come and see. Sometimes the management presume it is not the community's concern to know the activities of the school. From the minutes of meetings that schools conduct with PTA meetings, it was also revealed that the meetings are conducted once in a while and the participation of parents in such meetings is underrepresented.

This might be attributed to the fact that centralization limits lateral relations as put by Herman (2018). The concentration of authority to the school managers weakens the vertical relationships. People end up demotivated and feeling like a waste of time to take part in issues where their ideas will not be taken on board in the end. This however might bring ineffectiveness in schools' accomplishments since school programs should not simply be forced on schools but requires mutual interaction with all stakeholders (Mulkeen et al., 2020).

4.1.2.2. Delayed decision making due to top bottom approach

The progressions of making decisions have shown to have a longer thread to follow. For example, taking the issue of discipline procedures, there is a long path that sometimes fail to reach the end point and decisions are never reached. This is what the respondents stated:

> "*We call for the discipline committee to hear and ask them to write reports. If it is a teacher, we call for discipline and write a report to the division together with charge sheets and suspension letter, at the division they also meet as a discipline committee, if the decision is made, they write us to notify us of the division's decision*" DH6

Similarly, another respondent enlightened on the issue of discipline by saying:

> "*Students are disciplined by the discipline committee. If their cases require internal punishment, we punish them but if the offense is big, we charge the student with a case and submit it to the division which upholds a decision or send the case to the ministry and wait for their decision. The problem with this process is that we do not get immediate response from the division*". HT8

In accord to the above, here is another explanation from another manager:

> "*Issues are handled according to the procedure. when it gets out of hand, we refer to the division, though sometimes we might refer a case and they give their own views*

contrary to ours, they behave as if they know more on the ground than those that are actually on the ground and that is a challenge. It also takes long for them to respond and the sad part is that as heads, we give them direction but they come up with their own decisions as if they are on the ground that becomes painful. As of now, we just got used to the nature of our system, they do things slowly and the way they want it. That affects us as managers because we remain with the problem which keeps on disturbing us and affects our operations" HT1

The theories guiding the study described very well how education centralization makes sure that managerial decisions are made through a rational process. The structural theory for example, talks about an organization having 5 levels, these levels are like steps which guides the decision-making process, they are supposed to be logically followed when making decisions (Bush, 2020). This is evident in the MoEST, (2014) guidelines now MOE of handling discipline issues which also advocates for a similar procedure. MoEST recommended that first of all, the offender must be summoned and given a charge sheet where they should be charged against the offense they have committed, then the offender should be asked to write a report in front of a witness which is signed by the offender and the witness, thereafter the case is taken to the discipline committee, recommendations are made by the committee which should be submitted to the head teacher who also makes his/her recommendations to MoEST with a copy to the division office. The process also applies to discipline issues of teachers.

In support of the framework and the guidelines outlined by Ministry of Education Science and technology, the respondents were speaking the same language with the above sentiments. They also revealed that discipline issues follow a similar process to handle and does not require a day or two.

Bush, (2013) agrees that in decentralized education systems, decision making is fast since decisions are taken within the school and non-political decisions are made. Any kind of

problem can be acknowledged and solved immediately without the understanding by authorities in the Centre considered necessary.

4.1.2.3. Lack of flexibility

Despite the school managers being qualified and having a job to do, the study revaluated that managers do not fully exercise their duties in this system of education. To them the system brings in a hindrance, here is what they had to say:

> *"Centralized system also compromises with how we work, we are directed by the policies, as managers we cannot just impose our own policies, for example; in the rural areas you see that a lot of students do not go further with education because there is limited space at secondary schools for example, we are told that in each class there should be 50 students from five of our feeder schools, some students pass but cannot be enrolled according to proportion needed. Feeder schools are many. If managers were given chance to allow more intake in schools where there they feel like there is still more space at least a good number of children would come to secondary school. Managers should be given opportunity to make decisions such as such to ease access in a decentralized way."*HT1

To show his infringement by the system HT9 also shared his experience by saying that;

> *"The system is like this because they want schools to be run politically, for example if I am to send these students on government bursary who have not paid fees home, I will be cautioned to say that I am maybe a cadet wanting to make the government look bad and embarrass it, so our hands are tied. We cannot exercise our managerial roles by doing what is right. On the other hand, if these students are to demonstrate one day because they don't have water or food, the very same people will say that we are incompetent."*

The participants of the study were all well qualified, qualified in the sense that they had the minimum requirement for becoming a secondary school teacher which is a diploma in education or a bachelor's degree in education and about 9 of them have been in their positions for more than 6 years making them more experienced. Experience has proved to play a part in how better a manager can be, experience can raise a person's potential in terms of skills knowledge, techniques and the way they carry out certain jobs as written in the literature by

Widiana et al., (2012).

But regardless of this, the findings are that managers are not trusted to make good judgments, instead, they refer most of their cases to the central office. Not only that, the handling of finances, hiring and transfer of teachers and students remain the duty of the higher office and not the school management. Their job description gives the autonomy but they are limited to perform such duties.

It is a well-known fact that when someone is chosen to be a manager of an institution many factors are taken into consideration making that person better for the role. They are chosen from their different qualities and abilities and they are given a job description to perform their job. Studies have shown that this helps enhance management abilities. In other countries for example England, the qualities of a good school manager have received a strong policy emphasis, it is believed to be one of the biggest reasons that helps schools improve as well as raise standards of education, (Education Development Trust, 2017).

4.1.2.4. Financial instability

The verdicts reveal that the centralized education system brings financial instability. Effective practices for financial management as put in the NES include; audits without queries, letting the community count for the finances and having a history of financial stability accounts for well-managed finances (NES, 2015). Schooling resources that cost money matter, and more equitable distribution of funding at a school can improve outcomes, that is why financial management and availability of money to run schools become something to include in making sure that schools perform according to standards.

The respondents of the research kept mentioning that they had problems with financial management since there is instability in the flow of money in schools. Managers revealed that they depend much on the funding that comes from the government in running schools.

As for boarding schools, they receive a little top-up from the learner's boarding fees though they it is still not enough. Unfortunately, these finances are controlled by the headquarters and it becomes very hard for head teachers to follow up when they receive little funding or no funding for an academic year. As one of the reasons schools fail to reach effective practices on management, finances cannot be left out, the following arguments evolved out of the same:

> *"We fail to work because of Lack of finances, all along we have been depending on ORT for a lot of things e.g. conducting in-service trainings, and since July 2021 we haven't received any money. So, what we do is to divert money meant for example food here in boarding schools and we pay electricity." money to buy supplementary reading materials and buy chalk"*HT9

Another participant also said that:

> *"We Lack of adequate finances so that we can procure required materials and hire human resource for example support staff"* HT2

Not only that, he continued by saying that:

> *"Finances are not enough, Infrastructure is not enough, we do not have enough teachers and with little funding we do not conduct CPDs. We even lack of resources e.g., paper to produce exams, we are not receiving enough funding from the government"*

As if that is not enough, another participant narrated that:

> *"We cannot award our students and teachers because we do not have resources, we prioritize other important things and leave others though we understand that both are equally important in helping fulfilling the standards"* HT8

> *"this is year is even worse, we have been expecting money from the government for learners that are on government bursary but we have not received yet, we are keeping these children in school and am assuring you that they have been using resources for their friends the whole academic year, it is not easy on us"* added HT3

The researcher tried to probe more by asking the manager to provide evidence to what they were saying, one headteacher was kind enough to provide a list of names of learners with their fee's balances. Below is a picture of one of the sheets of papers that contained the names with fees balances.
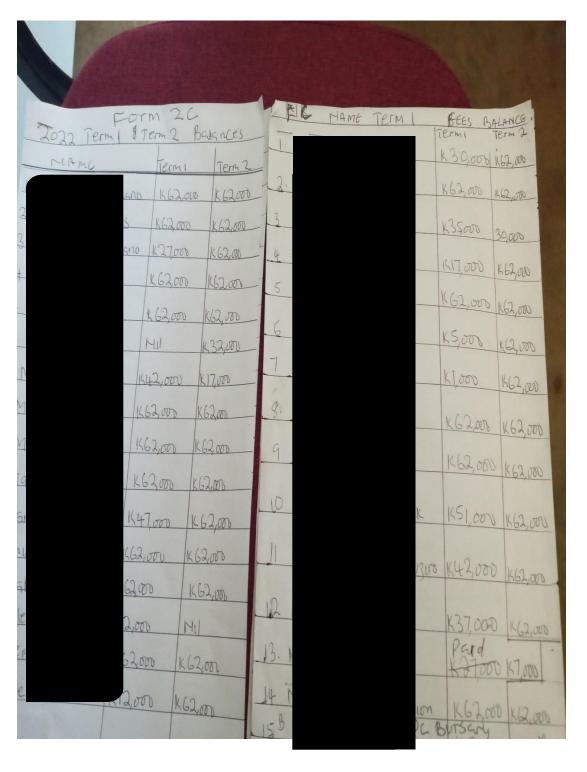
Figure 4.1 Fees Balances for the learners in both first and second terms

Just similar to the case where there were a lot of students with fees balances from students under government bursary which was a boarding school, another respondent from another boarding school complained and said:

> "*From July 2020- March 2021 we only saw figures of how much we were supposed to get from government but that money did not come, now we only source form the fees that the students are paying, It is worse here in boarding schools because having more than 500 students and feeding them 3 meals a day and pay for their utilities for a term is not a joke*"

Schooling resources that cost money matter and more equitable distribution of funding at a school can improve outcomes, which is why financial management and availability of money to run schools become something to contemplate in making sure that schools perform according to standards. The respondents of the research kept mentioning that they have problems with financial management since there is instability in the flow of money in schools. Managers revealed that they depend much on the funding that comes from the government in running schools. As for boarding schools, they receive a little top-up from the learners' boarding fees though they say it is still not enough. Unfortunately, these finances are controlled by the headquarters and it becomes very hard for head teachers to follow up when they receive little funding or no funding for a whole academic year.

Lack of financial resources is a challenge that has also been found by other studies done by Konza (2008) and (Mwale et al. 2010). Findings by Itimu and Kopetz (2008) conducted in Tanzania, Malawi, and Zambia showed that all these countries lacked financial resources for accomplishing the Special Needs Education policy. The same was noticed in a study in North Cyprus where school managers complained that in a centralized education system, they failed to manage their school budget, except from handling a small amount of money that was sometimes provided by parent's union.

This is exactly the case with Malawian secondary schools because the study revealed that schools are heavily depending on development fund from students. The situation is frustrating for some managers who said that they end up feeling worthless and ineffective.

However, this contradicts with other studies which argue that centralization can be beneficial for financial management (Perkins, Et al., 2004). This is said to be the case since managers in a centralized system have less pressure and less workload so they are keener and more careful in evaluating and handling finances.

4.1.2.5. Delays encourages indiscipline

Discipline in schools can be defined as respect for school rules and regulations and the maintenance of an established standard of behaviour which implies self-control, restraint, and respect for oneself and others (Idu & Ojedapo, 2011). A behaviour contrary to the above becomes indiscipline. The study's findings found that the delays in solving discipline matters in secondary schools encourage indiscipline. Some managers had to say:

> "*Sometimes the division takes too long to sit down and report to the ministry. For example, last year we had a case whereby a student beat up a deaf child and we recommended for indefinite suspension but nothing was done until the time for exams reached and that child came and wrote the exams. These kind of cases sends a bad picture to students because they think that whatever they can do the management can have nothing to do about it.*"HT4

Disciplinary matters of teachers are even worse to handle as the participant had put it:

> "*For teachers it is a bit difficult because they tell us point blank that we did not employ them, but we still take them to discipline, if they don't change, we report them to the division the problem comes when the division does not act up on it.*" DH3

The problem of indiscipline in schools has persisted over the years. There is no doubt that student indiscipline generally militates against effective teaching and learning and the production of useful members of society.

This behaviour brings frustration and a lack of motivation to teachers. The government sometimes contribute to indiscipline by not providing adequate facilities and resources in schools (Idu et al., 2011). Not only that, lack of proper punishments and negligence on discipline matters brings in a tendency of indiscipline and no respect for authority.

In agreement with the above literature, the participants of the study as well said that, it is because of the leniency of the division and the ministry in responding to critical cases of indiscipline that these cases are rising in the schools. It is worth noting that indiscipline also happens in teachers and school managers in some cases and all have similar or more negative effects on school discipline.

4.1.2.6. Shortage of staff and support staff

Teacher deployment remains the duty of the Ministry of education, a lot of graduates lately have been finishing school but the ministry has failed to send them to work in schools but schools remain understaffed. Managers try to report shortages to the division offices which also wait upon receiving new recruits that are sent to schools. It also happens that even after receiving teachers', schools receive teachers that they did not ask for, in subject that are not needed and the shortage still remain.

The findings also unveiled that schools are even failing to employ support staff, for example library assistants. Most of the people working in secondary School libraries are teachers that are simply asked to assist despite having a job to do as teachers.

> *"Yes, we have a library, but no library assistants, we use teacher librarians because we can afford to hire a librarian.*" (HT1)

Another respondent also said:

> *"Yes, we have a library but no library assistant because that would raise our wage bill. We use library teachers who in many times they are busy with teaching. As a result, we do not open full time"* (HT10)

The NES requirements on teacher deployment and development is that managers should be able to deploy staff within the school in line with their training, experience and skill but this is contrary to what happens on the ground taking it from the findings of the study.

A study by Emma Garcia & Elaine Weiss (2019) in the United States also found that schools have shortages of staff but school managers fail to deploy the needed staff because, in public education systems, this becomes the responsibility of the government. This proved to have a negative impact on student's ability to learn because the available teacher's effectiveness is threatened and the quality of education delivered is not paramount.

In many developed countries however, research has found that teacher shortages are addressed by school principals who are given the power to prepare and conduct continually development courses and programs which include hiring and firing of teachers (Sutcher & Padolsky 2017; Espinoza, 2017; Kini, Bishops, & Darling Hammond, 2016). The programs also improve principals' ability to include teachers in decision making which fosters positive school culture and creates good learning and working environments. These studies pointed to several key features of effective principals in addressing staff shortages such as:

- Close collaboration between schools and districts that help in teacher development and deployment
- Principals should be able equipped with skills to seek funding that can be allocated to employing staff
- states should consider providing funding for principals to receive preparation and professional development including school management courses or programs so, the study concluded that school managers play a crucial role in building a stable and strong teacher workforce when given power to do so.

A lot of the implications of the system dwelled on the negative side however other findings of the study ascertained the goodness of the centralized education system as participants mentioned the subsequent points as being a result of using the centralized path.

4.1.2.7. Ensures Job Security

For teachers working in government, it takes multiple offences for one to lose his or her job because of the process that leads to dismissal. It was also evident during data collection that the researcher did not find any documents that could show evidence of the dismissal of teachers in the school's discipline files. All that was found were warning letters and minutes for disciplinary hearings.

> *"To me waiting for the ministry to act is normal because we are not the ones who employed the teachers or selected the students. It is the policy we follow so it is okay."* (DH2)

The above statement implies that teachers remain on their job while waiting for the disciplinary procedures by the ministry of education and still enjoy the benefits of civil service which should not happen in private institutions.

4.1.2.8. Encourages order/ Hierarchical predictable system

Order in the sense that there are no shortcuts. Subsequently everything follows proper procedure and takes enough time to find evidence to issues that need evidence as well us gaining insights from others who have had a chance to pass through the same experience.

So as the below respondents are in support:

> *"Centralization is good because it gives chance for the students to remain in school, because as a manager we have to put ourselves in the shoes of the learners".* HT1
>
> *"In some cases, this is good because it prevents personal matters affecting professionalism"* HT9

All these help people in the system to avoid making fast irresponsible decisions that require processing, it helps learners to stay in school making sure that the issue of equity and access is not being compromised. This is in line with the framework which advocates that decisions need to be made in a rational process.

4.1.3. Factors affecting the achievement of effective practices on NES under management.

Data for this objective was collected through interviews and document analysis. When asked to brainstorm potential factors that may hinder school managers to fulfil the NES under management, a lot of issues emerged, amongst them the following came out strong and frequently.

4.1.3.1. Knowledge gap

The study found that lack of information on policies affect how managers understand and influence others to work towards achieving policy goals for the school. Schools reported that they could not fulfil the effective practices of the NES because they did not have the knowledge of the NES and its requirements.

Lack of knowledge for some managers was because NES came as a surprise. Managers reported that they were not consulted on the development of the standards but only received a call from MoEST that every school must operate under the set standards. One of the participants said:

> *They don't involve enough teachers in making and amending policies for example the covid 19 guidelines were imposed on us, how to handle the students was unrealistic, the number required in a class could not work because we do not have enough structures, the same happened with the NES policy"* DP3

UNESCO (2020) report wrote that it is in the plans of MOEST to include consultations and involve education stakeholders but during a meeting conducted with teachers in 2020 by UNESCO it was revealed that this does not happen, and most teachers have never been involved in policy formulation. Teachers in Malawi said they wished there was a social dialogue between them and MOEST. In the report, teachers informed UNESCO that the relationship that exists between teachers and MoEST is less confrontational than dialogue oriented. This concurs with the findings of the study. The suggested platforms for dialogue at the meeting were through media and the Teachers Union.

This does not only happen in Malawi but also in countries like the United States. Since the dawn of public education, there has been a failure in acknowledging the expertise of school managers and teachers in deciding and implementing policies for education that is according to Hinnat-Crawford (2016). In Canada at least, teachers are being recognized as sources of important information to assess and improve education, this was found true in a study done by (Morse, et al., 2002).

Knowledge gap is also attributed to by the following factors:

4.1.3.2. Lack of training

After the NES was introduced, there was no training or orientation. Out of 20 respondents, most of the respondents mentioned that one of the factors that hinder the fulfilment of the NES is due to lack of proper orientation and training.

> *"We are not oriented on being managers we are just chosen to be in the offices and we don't know what management is about so we perform not as expected because we don't know"* HT4.

On the same issue of training another participant also said that:

> *"The NES was introduced to us in a very short period of time that we did not even understand it, but we were expected to teach teachers in the schools."* DP6

The managers complained that problems with improper management and failure to fulfil effective NES start from how the appointment of head teachers is done to what happens after. In the current system, head teachers and Deputy Heads are appointed based on political affiliation and years of service (Dzimbiri, 2016). Such being the case, the issue of formal training in management does not count. When managers are put into office, they depend much on what they will be told to do and the experiences of other managers through handovers but there is no formal training. This makes them have little knowledge on policies and the formal structures of the education. Having no formal training also leads to managers having limited power in decision making for example in discipline cases, the manager's decisions largely end up giving warnings, the next steps are referring to responsible officers for further action and sometimes reporting to police if the cases are criminal and waiting for further action, in most cases, the reviews may not come in favour of the managers (Kumwenda, 2018).

Not only are the managers not trained on job but it was mentioned that policies are not taught in pre-service institutions. School managers claimed that their failure to manage schools and reach their goals is because they never had a chance to learn about policies in college during their training.

> *"Only if these things were incorporated in the curriculum when we are trained as teachers, then we could easily implement them when we come to teach but we start hearing about policies when we are now working and they are confusing."* HT8

Literature has shown that teachers are expected to be proficient in curriculum and policy understanding implementation through training them while they are in college. Including Policy in teacher training programs can improve their ability to develop evident skills that could later be displayed in schools through better results (Chalmers, 2007).It was recommended (Henard & Roseveare, 2012) that institutions of higher learning providing training to teachers should be keen and consider providing knowledge on policy and policy implementation to improve school management.

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4.1.3.3. Indiscipline

Indiscipline also came out as the fourth factor that also hinders the achievement of effective practices of the NES. This includes both indiscipline of teachers and learners. Below are sentiments from some participants:

> *"The students lack discipline, the culture that the students have is that we should always push them, on their own they are not motivated."*HT9

He also said that:

> "*Teachers do not respect authorities these days, the coming of human rights and lack of seriousness of the ministry gives these teachers the zeal to disobey and do whatever they want"*

Indiscipline is triggered by different causes, sometimes due to ill maintenance of discipline in educational institutions which later hampers the success of management (Chudnovskaya, 2020). Handling indiscipline issues not only causes distress but steals up valuable instructional time which limits students learning potential and leads to failure in achieving education standards.

4.1.3.4. Lack of collaboration

The study found that another factor that affect the implementation of NES was lack of collaboration within the management team and between management and teachers. The managers deliberate that it could be easier to achieve the NES if there was corporation between management and the team of teachers, this is evident in the excerpt below:

> *"It's the attitude of the teachers, they think managers just want to find faults"* DP4

On the same, another participant narrated that:

> *"Some head teachers do not share responsibilities with their deputies, the relationships are not good. They forget that headship can be done by everyone"* DP7
> Lack of cooperation and collaboration hinders the performance of instructional duties. This stirs up confusion and disorganization, it leads to communication breakdowns

and professionals end up doing things according to individual preferences which disrupts educational goals. A common goal is what binds people together in their work and enables them to achieve positive outcomes (Slater, 2013). That goal right at the top is what everyone will be striving to work towards. The principle of school managers working in isolation with their staff retards school improvement, people do not share ideas, improvement plans, expertise and other skills that lead to job satisfaction and professional growth (Slater, 2013).

Ingram, (2020) in a study where he explored Teacher and Staff collaboration in Elementary Schools is also in agreement with the findings of this study. According to Ingram, when administrators and staff members collaborate, it produces a stronger conducive environment, an implication of this is staff members develop stronger relationships and this can transfer into classroom environments as well and that can also enhance the implementation of the NES.

4.1.3.5. No follow-ups

Another factor is nonexistence of follow-ups on policy implementation. The study found that visits to schools by inspectors are inadequate. From the document analysed, the researcher checked visitors' books to see how often inspectors visit schools, it was noted that in some schools it has taken about two years without being visited. Managers also complained that they do not have enough time to do supervision and follow-ups in place of the quality assurance team instead they just sit and wait for the inspectors to do their job.

Two responds agreed to this finding by saying:

> *"The quality assurance team should visit schools frequently minimum twice a term, teachers would not relax"* DP4

> *"Time is another hindering factor. We managers are also teachers but the NES demands time for a lot of activities e.g., supervision, this becomes hard for us unlike if we could just focus on management duties."*HT6

School heads cannot manage to carry out daily and frequent observations of teachers. This leads to non-compliance with some minimum requirements resulting in compromises with effective performance duties, and lack of supervision also increases the frequency of damage (Izwa et al., 2018).

4.1.3.6. Inadequate Resources

As good as resources may be, they can also be a challenge and a factor leading to the failure of achieving NES. It was noted through the findings that schools are hardly provided with enough resources to aid the accomplishment of standards for education. These resources include proper structures that are inclusive, finances, manpower, teaching and learning materials as well as a good learning environment.

> *"They are good things if they are to be implemented but the problem is implementation is impossible without resources"* said DP5

This has been an outcry in many studies and literature but it continues to be a big problem not only here in Malawi but different countries as well (Njoroge, 2019; Maffea, 2020; Mupa, 2015 & Mutungwa, 2014). All these studies agree to the fact that without required enough resources in schools, it becomes hard for learners, teachers and managers to achieve high performance.

4.1.3.7. The management system

Lastly, the management system. Most of the participants pointed that they are not capable of performing to the best of their abilities because the system limits them.

> *"The system is also a challenge; a lot of activities are always on stand still because we wait on the central government to do them for us"*HT6

The current education system is more theoretical than practical. Other factors and efforts helping the accomplishments of the NES are neglected. Managers simply comply with the higher offices despising important actions that might help uplift schools. Developing countries have proved to have focused much on their education system and made reforms starting way back in the 1990s (UNESCO, 2020). Change and flexibility in education systems have also proved to increase student success in Turkey that is as regards to the findings of a study conducted by (Ates, et al. 2013)

4.4. Conclusion

In summary, objective one established that school managers have little knowledge of the NES and the secondary schools are operating in a highly centralized system, objective two unveiled that there are both negative and positive implications of the Centralized Education System on management as well as the achievement of the NES and finally it was noted that factors like knowledge gap and finances also lead to failure in achievement of the NES.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

The study coveted to explore how secondary school managers in SEED discharge their duties to achieve effective practice level of the NES under management within a centralized education system. This chapter therefore presents a brief overview of the findings in chapter 4. This is then followed by the summary of findings, conclusion, recommendations based on the findings. These are useful to various stakeholders that may find the research important, for example educators, advisors, curriculum planners, the general public and policy makers and suggested areas for further research.

5.1. Summary of Findings

The use of the conceptual framework structural and bureaucratic theories allowed the study to relate the findings and literature of the study regarding the experiences of secondary school managers who took part in the study. It mainly focused on the experiences that these managers go through in achieving the NES under management while working in a centralized system.

The first objective aimed at finding out managers knowledge and understanding of the NES under management and the managers' description of the education system that is currently been followed in secondary schools. The findings of the study found the following:

Most of the school managers lacked knowledge of the NES under management. Some of the reasons for the lack of knowledge were that it has been years since they were oriented on the policy and no refresher has been conducted and of course, lack of interest to know. Even

though this was the case more than half of the schools visited had the policy document but in most cases under the custody of the head teacher and not the deputy head teacher.

In describing the system, it was concluded that the system of education in practice is highly centralized. Managers said the system depended highly on following: mandates, strict rules and regulations, meticulous record keeping, hierarchy, and power concentrated on a single point or a few individuals. This is a typical description of a centralized education system. Though there was a mention of some decisions being made at the school level, it was only limited. This showed that even though something's might be decentralized, the system remains centralized to a larger extent.

Objective two was intended to discover implications of managing schools a centralized education system in achieving the NES under management. The findings of the study found that there are a lot of negative implications of the system towards full filling the NES under management than there is positive implication. Some examples include minimizing interaction between the school and the community, financial instabilities, increasing cases of indiscipline and delays in in decision making.

As a result of the implications, there are no proper punishments given to offenders, audits always have queries, management cannot deploy staff even if they have shortages, nevertheless school managers feel less empowered.

The study found out that the following factors affect the achievement effective practices of the NES in Secondary schools found in SEED: Lack of required resources, knowledge gap, indiscipline, the management system, no collaboration between head teachers and other staff members, no frequent follow ups on policy implementation e.g., inspections are periodic as such people tend to relax, and no consultations from teachers and managers are made.

5.2. Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that, after seven years of incepting the NES, school managers still lack proper knowledge of the policy. Managers agreed to have heard of the NES but could not describe the same, especially on what is required as management effective practices. This indicated one possible reason why only two of the ten schools visited reported to have reached the effective practices of the NES upon the last inspection of their schools. More than half of the participants said they work in a centralized system and the system has been shown to bring implications like indiscipline, lack of cooperation and collaboration, delayed decision-making, and job security among others. These are key concepts in the structural and bureaucratic theories which guided the study.

The lack of knowledge of the policy came out as a contributing factor to the manager's failure to full filling effective practices of the NES in addition to a lack of adequate resources, lack of follow-ups, and less power given to managers and the management system. Consequently, the fulfilment of effective practices remains a problem.

5.4. Recommendations

- The government through MoE should ensure that teachers are trained on policy by incorporating the concept in their teacher training curriculum.
- The school managers should try to attain managerial skills through upgrading themselves, reading and find ways to gain this knowledge on their own, effectiveness of education can be delivered by managers who have necessary skills in management this can be done through upgrading themselves, reading and find ways to gain new knowledge.

- The education sector should consider decentralizing crucial areas of management for school managers that may reduce the hindrance to fulfilment and implementation of the standards.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

The Research was labour intensive since the searcher was the only person to reach out all ten schools that took part in the study, it was time consuming to go around 10 schools and the study was conducted with 20 participants, data collection was based on appointment dates fixed with individual respondents. The Sample size was small to make significant relationships from other managers, for example relating the results to other managers in the same education division since only a few managers were sampled. In some schools, access was denied by other managers who did not have time and were busy with other duties. This might have led to just following through on the research. People's perception of research is monetary most participants thought being a part of the research will give them a chance to earn money, this might have lessened their interest and the kind of information they provided might not reflect their true experiences.

5.6 Areas for further studies

- As a way of making sure that management standards are fulfilled the communities are supposed to take part, but during the time of research the researcher found that there is minimal involvement of parents in supervision as well as policy sharing with managers, in the centralized management system the role of communities do not clearly reflect, it would be good to know why this is the case and if at all it is contributing to the failure in fulfilling the NES under management.

- Managers complained about using the NES as a standard tool for all schools might not ideal since schools differ in the type of students they have, the resources they have and many other characteristics as such a research can be conducted to find out the effectiveness of using the NES as a standard tool for measuring all schools effectiveness.

- As much as a lot of studies have already been conducted on education decentralization, it would be ideal to look at this area here in Malawi. Some countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, and South Africa seem to excel with education after decentralization, can the same happen in Malawi?

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APPENDICES

Appendix1. Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEAD TEACHERS AND DEPUTY HEAD TEACHERS

1.   How long have you been a head teacher/ Deputy Head teacher?

2.   What is your qualification?

3.   As a head teacher / Deputy Head teacher, are you operating in a centralized or decentralized system? Explain your answer

4.   Have you ever heard about National Education Standards? If yes, what are they? If no, what do you think they are?

5.   Do you have a copy of the NES?

6.   What are you required to do as a manager in order to fulfill effective practice on management under NES?

7.   To whom do you report to as a head teacher/ Deputy Head teacher

8.   Does the school display information for students and the community to access? If yes HOW? If no WHY NOT?

9.   Do you have copies of school rules? Attendance and punctuality of students?

10.   Do you have copies of policies on children welfare e.g. child protection?

11.   Are there support groups or do students have chance to talk to teachers when they need

        to?

12.   Are the toilets and all structures accessible by learners with disabilities?

13. How often do you conduct school assemblies?

14. Do you have the school management handbook, a copy of the curriculum and syllabuses?

15. Are textbooks and supplementary reading and learning resources enough?

16. Do you have a functional library and a library assistant?

17. Do all teachers have teacher's guides, policies and handbooks?

18. Does the school keep minutes of meetings between the school and parents/PTA?

19. What do you do when there is need for teacher's deployment, promotion or transfer?

20. How are discipline issues handled at the school for both teachers and learners?

21. What factors help you in realizing the management requirements of the NES?

22. What factors hinder you from realizing the management requirements of the NES?

23. Do you have anything else you would like to share on the topic?

Appendix2. Document Analysis Guide

Document	Availability		Comments
	Available	Not available	
NES			
Punishment book			
Log book			
Discipline file			
Circulation file			
Teachers guides			
Policies and handbooks			
School management Handbook			
Student registers			
Time books			
Copies of school rules			
Minutes for meetings with the community and PTA			
Any other comments or observations:			

Appendix3.   A fragment of Transcribed data

| 6 | What are you required to do as a manager in order to fulfill effective practice on management under NES | HT1. I know them just in general not specific for management

HT2. Forgotten the details

HT3. As a manager the NES requires me to use it as a guide in running the school, it helps us assess how we are performing.

HT4. as a manager our major role is supervisory role, we supervise the implementation of the the National Education Standards, checking if teaching and learning is in line with the curriculum,
 The standards emphasize the need for evidence of teaching as such the need for records.

HT5. As a manager I don't really know exactly what to do

HT6. Required to take care of a number of issues on how the schools should be run.

HT7. I don't know what they mean |

Appendix4. Consent from Mzuni REC

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
L u w i n g a
M z u z u   2
M A L A W I
TEL: 01 320 722

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/ 31/03/22

Violet Duwa,

Mzuzu University,

P/Bag 201, Mzuzu.

Email:

duwavioleto@gmail.com

Dear Violet,

RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR

PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/31: EXPLORING   THE IMPLEMENTATION   OF   NATIONAL   EDUCATION   STANDARDS   IN A CENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL MANAGERS IN SOUTH EAST EDUCATION DIVISION, MALAWI

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform

you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now

permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the

approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly

Committee Address:

Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2;

Email address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,

Gift Mbwele MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC

Appendix5. Letter of introduction

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

Department of Teaching, Learning and
Curriculum Studies

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

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

31st March 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: VIOLET DUWA

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

Kindly assist her accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Margaret M. Mdolo

Program Coordinator

Appendix6. Permission from Division Manager

Ref.No.SEED/HRM/04/03   Date: 19 APRIL 2022

From: The Education Division Manager,

     South East Education Division,

     Private Bag 48,

     ZOMBA.

To   : The Headteacher,

     ~~CHILUNGA C.D.S.S.~~ ....Secondary School

RE: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FORVIOLET DUWA

As the above subject refers, the bearer of this letter is Mr./Mrs./Miss/Bro/Sr...Violet Duwa a student from Mzuzu University. She would like to conduct a research on the topic "MANAGING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN A CENTRALISED EDUCATION SYSTEM"

Your usual assistance on this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Violet K Mpoyk

For: EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER(SEED)