

**THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED STAKEHOLDERS IN PROMOTING
SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY: THE CASE OF SIX SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN BALAKA DISTRICT- SOUTHERN REGION OF MALAWI**

MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP) THESIS

ANDERSON MANDA

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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

By

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University of Malawi

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby do declare that this thesis is my original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes, and where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have duly been made.

Full Legal Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents- Mr. A. Manda and Mrs. L. Kaunda Manda for their love, care and, proper upbringing, not forgetting my lovely wife: Rennie Chikaoneka Manda and, the two children; Chanju and Glory for their unwavering support, love, understanding and, encouragement throughout the academic struggle in the course of developing this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability in six secondary schools in Balaka District. The study used Public Engagement Theory as its theoretical framework and adopted a case study design in a qualitative paradigm to explore the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability. It sought to establish how community-based stakeholders perceived their role in promoting school accountability, and their engagement in governance issues and finally unravel factors that enhanced community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability. The study was worth pursuing to help community members have a sense of ownership of institutions within their area and instill a culture of accountability, and prudent resource utilisation leading to improved performance in schools. Purposive sampling was employed to select the research participants from the community-based stakeholders, consisting of members of the Parent-Teachers' Association and Mother Groups. Data were generated qualitatively through the use of semi-structured interviews through Focus Group Discussions. Document analysis especially minutes of PTA meetings was used to a lesser degree because most schools did not have the minutes handy. In this study, data analysis involved a detailed description of what the participants reported which among other things included reading through and listening to data captured, organising and interpreting the data. The main findings of the study were: the community-based stakeholders have a critical role to play in the promotion of school accountability, that their engagement was mostly in infrastructural development, and that cooperation and rapport among various stakeholders were the main factors that enhanced the community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability. On the other hand, lack of training, transparency, and accountability were found to be some of the factors that hindered CBS's active and meaningful participation in the promotion of school accountability. The study recommends the introduction of formalised training to CBS's. Further, there is a need for consultation and establishment of good rapport with communities more so in financial issues to enhance transparency and accountability.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Chapter overview	1
1.2 Background Information	1
1.3 Statement of the problem	4
1.4 Purpose of the study	6
1.5 Subsidiary research questions	6
1.6 Significance of the study	6
1.7 Operational definition of terms	6
1.8 Thesis structure	8
1.9 Chapter Summary.....	8
CHAPTER TWO	10
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 Chapter overview	10
2.2 Parental and community participation in school accountability	10
2.3 What is school accountability?.....	12
2.4 Who are the community-based stakeholders?	13
2.5 Community involvement and school accountability	13
2.6 Stakeholders' perception of their role in promoting school accountability	16
2.7 Stakeholders' engagement in school management and decision-making processes	19

2.8 Factors enhancing community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability.....	24
2.9 Theoretical framework	25
2.10 Chapter Summary.....	27
CHAPTER THREE	29
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	29
3.1 Chapter overview	29
3.2 Research paradigm	29
3.3 Research design.....	31
3.4 Study area.....	32
3.5 Sampling technique	32
3.6 Data Generation Instruments.....	33
3.6.1 <i>Focus Group Discussion</i>	34
3.6.2 <i>One-to-one Interview</i>	34
3.6.3 <i>Document Analysis</i>	36
3.7 Pilot Study	37
3.8 The role of the researcher in data generation	37
3.9 Data analysis	38
3.9.1 <i>Data cleaning, organisation and categorisation</i>	39
3.9.2 <i>Coding</i>	39
3.9.3 <i>Development of themes</i>	39
3.9.4 <i>Enhancing credibility and trustworthiness</i>	40
3.9.5 <i>Triangulation</i>	40
3.9.6 <i>Peer review</i>	40
3.9.7 <i>Use of participants' verbatim quotes</i>	40
3.9.8 <i>Pilot study</i>	40

3.10 Ethical considerations	41
3.11 Seeking permission from gatekeepers.....	41
3.12 Solicitation of informed consent	41
3.13 Privacy and confidentiality.....	42
3.14 Limitations of the study.....	42
3.15 Chapter Summary.....	42
CHAPTER FOUR.....	44
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	44
4.1 Chapter overview	44
4.2.1 Age, gender and educational background of the research participants.....	45
4.3 PTA composition and membership	46
4.4 Perceptions of community-based stakeholders of their role in school accountability	48
4.4.1 Significance of community-based stakeholders	48
4.4.2 Training of community-based stakeholders	51
4.5 Community-Based Stakeholders' engagement in management issues	53
4.5.1 Kinds of management and decision-making processes the community stakeholders mainly get involved in.....	57
4.5.2 CBS's role in promoting active and meaningful community participation	59
4.5.3 On whether the CBS set goals on school performance	61
4.5.4 Ensuring that school management implements set standards	65
4.5.5 In case of poor performance, what do the community-based stakeholders do?67	
4.5.7 Procedures put in place to encourage community participation	70
4.5.8 Monitoring of student learning and other activities at school	71
4.6 Significance of CBS in ensuring School Accountability	73
4.7 Satisfaction with CBS's performance	74

4.8 Factors enhancing community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability	75
4.9 Factors hindering PTA's smooth participation in school management affairs	76
4.10 Chapter Summary.....	77
CHAPTER FIVE	79
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	79
5.1 Chapter Overview	79
5.2 Conclusions	79
5.2.1 <i>The role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability</i>	79
5.2.2 <i>Perceptions of Community-Based Stakeholders on the role of community participation in promoting School Accountability</i>	80
5.2.3 <i>The community-based stakeholders' involvement in school management and decision-making processes that promote school accountability</i>	81
5.2.4 <i>Factors enhancing community-based stakeholders' participation in school accountability</i>	82
5.2.5 <i>Factors hindering community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability</i>	82
5.3 Areas for further research.....	83
5.4 Chapter Summary.....	83
REFERENCES	85
APPENDICES	98

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Letter of Introduction from Chancellor College	98
APPENDIX 2: Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct a Research	99
APPENDIX 3: Letter of Introduction from Education Division Manager	100
APPENDIX 4: An Interview Guide for CBS (PTA) Members	101

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A pie chart showing the composition of PTA at one of the study sites 46

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBS:	Community-Based Stakeholders
CSP:	Community Support Programme
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
MG:	Mother Groups
MSCE:	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MLGRD:	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
NES:	National Education Standards
NESP:	National Education Sector Plan
NSCPPM:	National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management
PET:	Public Engagement Theory
PDM:	Participative Decision Making
PTA:	Parent Teachers' Association
SA:	School Accountability
SBM:	School-Based Management
SMC:	School Management Committee
SSC:	School Support Committee
VEC:	Village Education Committee
YONECO:	Youth net and Counselling

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter justifies the study. It outlines compelling reasons why the study was deemed appropriate and necessary to be carried out in the schools noting that issues of community participation and accountability are critical to the smooth operations of organisations and schools alike. The chapter is divided into six sub-sections. It comprises the background information, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and definitions of operational terms.

1.2 Background Information

Globally, one field of management which has for some time gained increased ground is that of accountability. In its broad terms, accountability is deemed as reflecting that time and situation when an individual or department is held responsible for the performance of a specific function. Different entities and institutions have incorporated the notion in the running of their day-to-day businesses. In school administration too, the term has made tremendous strides and gained massive support from educational policy makers and community members who are eager to make school and social accountability a reality in both policy and practice. The widespread understanding is that school accountability indisputably brings tangible benefits. Owing to this, educational institutions worldwide including Malawi have embraced the idea as well. This is consistent with the spirit of the 2009 Dakar Framework of Action, “where governments made a very general pledge that they will develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management,” (Educational International, 2009: p. 57). According to Figlio and Loeb (2011), school accountability is a wide-ranging concept that could be addressed in various ways such as; the incorporation and use of political processes to ensure democratic accountability, the introduction of market-based reforms to increase accountability to stakeholders, or development of peer-based accountability systems to

increase the professional accountability of teachers. Imperatively, community-based stakeholders have a critical oversight role to play in ensuring that the tenets of accountability are religiously adhered to by the governing authorities including the school administrators (Westhorp, Walker, Rogers, Overbeeke, Ball, and Brice, 2014).

Over the past few years, several countries have witnessed the delegation of decision-making power from the central government to the provincial, district, community, and school levels (Prew, Msimango, and Chaka, 2011). All this plausibly happened in a bid to improve the accountability of the service providers and increase the effectiveness and responsiveness of the resource allocations for improved performance. This wind of change began to blow over Malawi in 1994, when multiparty democracy, after thirty years of autocratic rule, was again ushered in and adopted as a system of government.

Under the influence of the international community, the government of Malawi first embarked on decentralisation programme through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) which was ensconced in the 1998 Local Government Act. This act provided that the process of decentralisation would roll out to other departments and such departments should be accountable to the District Assembly Committee responsible for their departments and answerable to the District Commissioner (Kufaine & Mtapuri, 2014). With this singular act, the seeds of transparency and accountability in government ministries, institutions, and departments were sown. Schools as part of public institutions were not spared, therefore were required to play the ball.

Consequently in 2008, the then Ministry of Education, Science and Technology developed the first Devolution Guidelines in line with the Decentralisation Policy of 1998 for use by different stakeholders. This was in response to and in line with the National Decentralisation Policy which required that management of education functions be devolved to district councils, (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2014)

Malawi government through its National Education Sector Plan (NESP) (2008-2017) took a bold step to ensure appropriate decentralisation of delivery of education services

which incorporates processes of planning, budgeting, financing, monitoring, and evaluation. These processes according to Fata & Kreng, (2015), include those that provide the accountability of teachers and schools in performing their tasks to ensure that students learn what they are supposed to learn.

To date, the term accountability has become a household name and one of the most frequently discussed aspects of the approaches to ensuring education quality although it first entered education research and policy discourse in the 1960s (Benveniste, 1985). Since then interventions aimed at improving school accountability have become part of policy responses to bring about school quality and at times to meet public demands for improved education services in a more cost-effective way (Figlio & Loeb, 2011).

To this effect, the government of Malawi through National Education Standards (NES: 2015), which is an extract from the National Education Sector Plan (NESP 2008-2017), affirms its commitment to devolving school governance. It has in turn established mechanisms to ensure and foster the involvement of community-based stakeholders in the running of the schools. Such mechanisms include the development of policies allowing the creation of School-Based Management (SBM) under which School Management Committees (whose establishment is enshrined in the constitution of the Republic of Malawi under the Education Act of 2013), Parent Teacher Associations, and Mother Groups operate albeit at different levels of schools. This fits in perfectly well with the Public Engagement Theory which advocates for such initiatives. It is however unfortunate that the breadth of literature available points out that there is selective community participation in that unlike in school infrastructural development, there is little or no participation in areas highly prone to abuse such as budget formulation, financial prudence, and procurement of materials and monitoring of teacher performance. Kaunda (2005) attests to this and refers to the minimal community participation in these areas as a recipe for nefarious activities such as abuse of power and corruption.

The National Education Standards (NES) (2015) document spells out the need to ensure that members of the School Management Committee (SMC) or Governing Board, Parent

Teachers' Association (PTA), and /or proprietors are knowledgeable about national educational policies and take practical steps to implement them in partnership with school leaders and the local community. This entails the highest possibility and ultimate need for community-based stakeholders' involvement in school management.

It is a sound policy on the outlook, if at all it is being implemented, for it provides the right holders with ammunitions and information they need to claim their rights and hold the government and its agents accountable. In fact, studies have shown that where there is excellent school accountability, mutual trust is built among the local communities so that they are more readily motivated to inject funds and make a greater contribution to schools (Fata & Kreng, 2015).

1.3 Statement of the problem

A number of studies have focused much on the impact of educational accountability on learner performance in academic institutions with robust management and accountability systems (Hanushek & Raymond, 2003; Raymond, 2005). But in order to have good school accountability systems and high-quality education, there is a need for community stakeholders to play an active role in the governance and management of the school. This view is also shared by Hara (2011) who contends that by establishing the short route of accountability; which comprises community representatives, parents, and school authorities to discuss the school plan and challenges facing the school in a bid to collaboratively improve the quality of education, schools have a high chance of attaining an improved intake, gross enrolment rate, and general school management. "They also share potential to improve accountability by linking the government, teachers, parents, community, and students to share information, raise awareness, dialogue, and act together- mostly these are ingredients which are key elements in expanding educational opportunities and improving the quality of education (Hara, 2011).

Despite the breadth of literature presenting the affirmative contribution of school accountability to the learner and school performance, the role of community-based stakeholders in Malawi remains hugely ignored (Rose, 2003). There is very little

participation by communities and parents in more contentious school management matters such as; resource and financial prudence, and monitoring of teachers' conduct and performance, thereby lowering accountability levels and opening a leeway for abuse of power, corruption, and other irregularities (Kaunda, 2005). There is a gap in matching policy with practice.

This evidently points to a discrepancy between the provision of the education policy on community participation and practice as members of communities are not involved in the processes of management. It is not known why community-based stakeholders do not participate in other crucial management issues despite the availability of the policy that not only plainly endorses but also emphasises community engagement in school-based management. By ignoring this aspect, we are completely disenfranchising the members of the communities who are the key stakeholders in the education of the citizens, and as such school accountability will only be mere rhetoric. There is a need therefore to unravel the factors that inhibit the communities leading to their minimal participation in issues to do with school governance hence lowering school accountability.

By promoting school accountability we are also enhancing learner and school performance in general. A Study by Maphosa, Mutekwe, Machingambi, Wadesangi, and Ndofirepi, in 2012, concluded that huge public funds used to finance education need to be justified by calls for responsibility and accountability in schools, particularly by teachers who should be accountable to the community members and parents. School accountability is in this regard an important issue worth pursuing for it establishes that needed mindset change by providing a safe, welcoming, and community participatory approach that helps hold all stakeholders responsible for high standards of performance. This view is shared by Munje (2018), who carried out a qualitative study on the impact of accountability on learners' experiences in poor communities in South Africa. The study found that teachers who were accountable for their actions and voluntarily changed their attitude when dealing with learners were the key element in the success of educational improvement systems. There is a need therefore to research the gap highlighted in order to improve the quality of education.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability.

1.5 Subsidiary research questions

The subsidiary research questions were:

1. How do community-based stakeholders perceive their role in promoting school accountability?
2. How are the community-based stakeholders engaged in school-decision making processes that promote school accountability?
3. What are the factors that enhance the community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is significant in that it would add to the existing bank of knowledge on the role of community-based stakeholders in the promotion of school accountability. It seeks to help raise and shape stakeholders' awareness and perceptions respectively about the importance of community engagement in school-based management. It further hopes to inform the policy makers at all levels (national, district, community, and school) to devise a mechanism that would allow for active and meaningful community participation in school management in line with the stipulations of the decentralisation policy. Finally, the study intends to help the practitioners (teachers and head teachers) in the field to establish good working relationships with all the stakeholders and practically engage them in school management processes. The good rapport so established will subsequently go a long way in improving the performance of the school and learners as accountability enhancers.

1.7 Operational definition of terms

Naturally, words have diverse meanings and indifferent contextual settings. To provide clarity, the following are definitions of the terms that specifically apply to this study.

Community participation/involvement/engagement: This is viewed herein as the active involvement of local communities in school management and decision-making processes, where specific groups, sharing parallel interests or living in a defined geographical area, actively pursue the identification of their needs and establish a mechanism to make their choice(s) effective (Dulani,2003). This is in tandem with the ‘Public Engagement Theory”, a theoretical framework chosen to guide this study. The theory advocates for the involvement of all sectors of the community in deliberations to build a common ground and collaboration before converging on a final process (Warburton et al., 2008).

School accountability: For the purpose of this study, it is defined and measured based on community-based stakeholders’ capacity and participation levels in promoting transparency and efficient use of resources in academic institutions (Fata &Kreng, 2015).

Delegation: It is perceived as the administrative and legal transfer of responsibilities to elected or appointed school governing bodies such as Parent Teachers’ Association, Mother Groups, school management committees, and school governing boards (USAID, 2011).

Devolution: This herein refers to the transfer of decision-making responsibilities in education to the school level at one place from the central education office (Marphatia, Edge, Legault & Archer, 2010).

Stakeholder: This is a term ascribed to any individual or group of individuals who can affect or is affected by the achievement or failure thereof of the school’s objectives (Freeman, 1984).

Community-based stakeholders: In this study, the community-based stakeholders are restricted to head teachers, Mother Groups, School Management Committees (SMC), and Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)

Governance: Herein governance refers to the execution of tasks that relate to but are not limited to the setting of the school's goals, direction, ensuring and monitoring of teacher and school performance, limitations, and accountability.

School management: In this study, the phrase, school management entails, apart from overseeing the day-to-day operations of the school, also denotes discharging some aspects of governance such as reviewing the school's progress, establishing strategic direction, implementing policy guidelines, and so on.

1.8 Thesis structure

This thesis comprises six sections. There is an abstract that gives an overview of the whole thesis. It also contains an introduction. This introduces the topic of the study and consists of other sub-divisions. It further presents the study thesis, statement of the problem, research questions, methods as well as findings of the study. Further, the thesis has a methodology section that precisely and expressly outlines the methods which were used to generate the data. Another area worth mentioning is the results section. It is in this part that the results and findings are presented. Every attempt and effort has been made to present the results clearly and objectively. The findings are discussed in the discussion section which is the last but one part of the thesis structure. Finally, there is a conclusion that summarises the entire thesis and calls for action based on the findings as well as provides suggestions on the areas that need further research in the field of accountability.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the fact that the study was fashioned out of the need to critically assess the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability. To implement this, the chapter has unveiled the need to fully grasp and embrace the tenets of decentralisation which would allow the community to fully integrate and participate in the running of the school affairs. The chapter further explained the perceived discrepancy between the provision of the education policy on community participation and practice as members of the communities are not involved in

the processes of management. However, by using the tenets borrowed from decentralisation policy, the chapter has highlighted the significance of the study in that it has the capacity to establish a cordial working relationship with all stakeholders and genuinely engage them in the school management processes leading to a subsequent improvement in the school performance and as school accountability enhancers. The engagement with stakeholders suits perfectly well with the Public Engagement Theory, a principle chosen to guide this study. The next chapter focuses on the review of all the literature consulted in the course of developing and writing this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter is a presentation of a review of related literature to the present study. It demonstrates the importance of community participation in education and how it is linked to the concept of accountability concerning school setup. The chapter also presents the meaning of community-based stakeholders in terms of the school context. It further draws insights from other research findings on the stakeholder's perceptions of their role in promoting school accountability; and seeks to establish in what manner are they engaged in the management and decision-making processes and finally explores factors that enhance community-based stakeholders' involvement in school management processes that promote school accountability. The last section of the chapter contains a discussion on the 'Public Engagement Theory,' the theoretical framework which guided the study.

2.2 Parental and community participation in school accountability

Parental and community involvement in education, particularly in school governance, is seen as a means of making schools more accountable to the society which funds them. This has been witnessed in some places such as England, Wales, Canada, and the United States. The notion of parental involvement for accountability is a derivative of a more market-oriented concept in which school-family partnerships are viewed rather like a business partnership, through which the two parties receive mutual and complementary benefits enabling them to operate more effectively (OECD, 1997).

The extensive examination of six case studies on the Philippines, Kenya, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Colombia and Bolivia led Rugh and Bossert (1998) to conclude that teachers and other school staff feel they should be accountable to community clients only when "the community holds some power over them: when they either come from the same

village and have social ties; if their continued employment or salaries depend on community satisfaction; or sometimes when community education committees exist to manage the schools and members are empowered to exert their influence” (Rugh&Bossert,1998, p.157). They also argue that accountability is developed through routine parents’ meetings and reporting systems on student progress. When parents contribute their time, labour, materials, land, and funds, they tend to be more involved in school activities, including participating in meetings with teachers and monitoring teachers’ performance. Teachers and school staff, in turn, feel more obliged to deliver better education for the students in order to respond to the needs of parents and communities.

It is widely understood that participation can greatly help develop accountability, which contributes to improving education delivery. Community participation is key in providing checks and balances to strengthen accountability and strong financial management to achieve everyone’s goal of school improvement (MOEST, 2014).

A Community Support Program (CSP) process in Balochistan, Pakistan, was developed to ensure village commitment to children, especially girls’ education. It defines the responsibilities of the community and the Directorate of Primary Education. The greater the participation of the community, both financially and in-kind, means they are more likely to demand accountability from staff. Parents are also more involved in the day-to-day management of the school where they see what is happening and what needs to be corrected. The CSP has formed the Village Education Committee (VEC) which consists of five to seven men whose daughters will attend the school. These VECs are formed to serve as the school’s official representative to the government. The formation of VECs has contributed to CSP’s establishment of an organisational structure that encourages teachers’ and local administrators’ accountability to parents. Once the school is opened, VEC members are empowered to report teacher attendance or behavioural problems to the government and to recommend teachers for training. This is a typical example of community-based stakeholders’ participation in school accountability as they play a role in somehow regulating school authorities’ conduct.

2.3 What is school accountability?

The term accountability is according to Levielle, (2006), a highly complex and broad concept that could be addressed in many ways such as using political processes to assure democratic accountability, introducing market-based reforms to increase accountability to parents, children as well as wider community or developing peer-based accountability systems to increase the professional accountability of teachers. It exists when those who set and implement a society's rules, politicians and public officials are answerable to the people who live under those rules(O'Neill et al., 2007). To understand and deal with the complexity of accountability, 'one needs to ask a series of questions; who is demanding accountability; from whom is accountability being sought; where-in what forum are they being held to account; how is accountability being delivered, and for what are people/institutions being held accountable? Goetz & Jenkins,(2005).

In this study, the focus of accountability is on the relationship between the school and the stakeholders such as parents and the local community, and the extent to which the school is accountable to the wider stakeholder community. Although it is understood that community participation and accountability are separate but related concepts, there is a likelihood that in some contexts, community engagement can lead to greater accountability, and a lack of community engagement will lead to a lack of accountability.

In discharging the operations of the school, administrators can make the school devoid of any iota of accountability to its stakeholders depending on whether they engage them or not in various management and decision-making processes. A relationship may be characterised as lacking in accountability or highly accountable in a relationship between two parties (O'Neill et al., 2007). According to Goetz and Jenkins (2005), there need to be two dimensions that must exist for there to be real accountability; these are answerability and enforceability.

In this instance, the school can be said to be accountable to the community-based stakeholders if it is obliged to explain and justify its actions to the community members and the community can sanction the school, and if her conduct or explanations for it is

found to be unsatisfactory. In addition, both dimensions of accountability require that there is transparency. 'In the absence of reliable and timely information, there is no basis for demanding answers or for enforcing sanctions' (Moore&Teskey, 2006).

2.4 Who are the community-based stakeholders?

Schools do operate in communities inhabited by several individuals with different characters and institutions which also have different visions and missions. These obviously form the community-based stakeholders of the school within them as Kettering (2014) accurately puts it. Dayaram (2011) also weighs in on this by saying schools are focal points that are intrinsically linked to their community welfare and growth. Freeman (1984) defines a stakeholder as any individual or group of individuals that can affect or be affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives. This is a particularly important but broad definition that virtually includes so many aspects such that the concept and intention of 'Public Engagement Theory' could not work effectively if all of them were to be taken on board. In the face of the given diversity of stakeholders, this study will focus on, parents, learners, and the governing bodies such as School Management Committees, Parent-Teachers Association, and Mother Groups, who are most often in direct contact with the schools as compared to the wider community.

2.5 Community involvement and school accountability

Education takes place not only in schools but also within families, communities, and society. Despite the various degrees of responsibilities taken by each group, no single group can claim sole responsibility for educating children. Parents and families cannot be the only group of people responsible for children's education as long as their children interact with and learn from the world outside their families. There is a need for communities and society to put their efforts and resources together in supporting parents and families in the upbringing, socialisation, and education of their children. Schools are institutions that can prepare children to contribute to the betterment of the society in which they operate, by equipping them with skills that are important in society. Schools cannot and should not operate in isolation within society. Since each group plays a different role in contributing to children's education, there must be efforts to make a

bridge between schools and societies to maximise the contributions. Education takes place most efficiently and effectively when these different groups of people collaborate. Accordingly, it is important to establish and continuously attempt to develop partnerships between schools, on one hand, parents and communities on the other. In turn, this partnership enhances transparency and accountability leading to effective and efficient resource management at the school level. “Community participation in school management has great potential for removing mistrust and distance between people and schools by nurturing transparency of information and culture of mutual respect” (Nishimura, 2017).

Many research studies have identified various ways of community participation in education, providing specific channels through which communities can be involved in children’s education.

Bruns, Filmer, and Patrinos, (2011) illustrate types and levels of participation by stating and emphasising the importance to know the type of community engagement and the actual power devolved to the community. These further assert that the categories in which power is devolved include budgeting which entails budget formation and allocation, pedagogy and educational content thus curriculum development, making of class schedules and school calendar and events, selection of textbooks, school infrastructure, and maintenance; thus improvement of buildings and other infrastructure, procurement of textbooks and scholastic materials and monitoring and evaluation of teaching performance and students’ learning achievement.

Empirical evidence in the past kinds of literature mostly from Latin American countries has mostly highlighted some impacts of community participation on the increased attendance of students and teachers and students’ learning achievements (Bruns et al., 2011). Just recently, Taniguchi and Hirakawa (2016) conducted a study in Malawi whose findings buttressed the point that there were some indirect positive relationships between community participation and the learning achievement of pupils through improved school management in rural Malawi.

Carneiro, Koussihoude, Lahire, Meghir, and Mommaerts (2015) in their study conducted in Senegal and other Sub-Saharan African countries, not only agree but also render full support to the notion that a combination of school autonomy, student learning assessments, and accountability to parents and other stakeholders brought better learning performance by students.

There are five identified categories of parent and community support that are relevant to the region: (1) children come to school prepared to learn; (2) the community provides financial and material support to the school; (3) communication between the school, parents, and community is frequent; (4) the community has a meaningful role in school governance; and (5) community members and parents assist with instruction.

Williams (1994) argues that there are three models of education and community. The first one is traditional community-based education, in which communities provide new generations of young people with the education necessary for transmitting local norms and economic skills. In this model, education is deeply embedded in local social relations, and school and community are closely linked. The government, being of little use in meeting the specialised training needs of industrialised economies, plays a minor role, providing little basis for political integration at the national level.

The second model is government-provided education, in which governments have assumed responsibility for providing and regulating education. The content of education has been largely standardised within and across countries, and governments have diminished the role of the community. However, lack of resources and management incapability has proven that governments cannot provide the community with adequate educational needs, fully-equipped school buildings, and a full range of grades, teachers, and instructional materials. This triggers the emergence of the collaborative model, in which the community plays a supportive role in government provision of education.

Williams further presents a model that shows the relations between the role of community and local demand. These approaches are fundamental springboards in helping

schools forge and cultivate a culture of responsibility in reaching out to communities, building trust, and effectively using community resources in promoting the education of the students in society.

In this regard, Lyness (2014) recommends myriad ways parents and communities can help children succeed in school and later life and focuses on partnerships of schools, families, and communities that attempt to (a) promote school attendance, programmes, and school climate; (b) improve parents' knowledge about disciplinary policies. These policies may include details about attendance, vandalism, cheating, fighting and illegal weapon possession; (c) provide family services and support; (d) increase parents' skills and leadership; (e) connect families with others in the school and in the community; and (f) help teachers with their work.

2.6 Stakeholders' perception of their role in promoting school accountability

Community-based stakeholders have mixed perceptions of their role in promoting school accountability. Some feel their engagement in school management and decision-making processes is largely superficial to make any significant contribution to school accountability. According to Banerjee & Dufflo (2006), community stakeholders' poor perception of their role in promoting accountability is the main reason why school systems do not function effectively. For instance, various studies on school accountability reveal that 'several problems have been noted, at the heart of which was a high rate of teacher absenteeism estimated at 27% which was attributed to the failure of accountability.' Banerjee & Dufflo (2006).

This corroborates with what Steiner-Khamisi, et al., (2009) noted from the reports published between 2004 and 2009 that teacher absenteeism rates of around 20% in Ghana, Indonesia at 21%, India at 25%, Uganda at 27%, and Kenya at 30% were the major barriers to student learning. Crudely put the communities feel sidelined in as far as school governance and decision-making is concerned. For instance, Marphatia, Edge, Legault, and Archer (2010) undertook a collaborative study in four Sub-Saharan countries to explore the role of parents and teachers in improving children's learning.

One of the findings was that parental and other community members' involvement in school activities and processes was mainly confined to financial and in-kind contributions to the schools.

On another extreme, Rose (2003) also noted that most community participation in school affairs in Malawi is largely extractive, thus the many that engage in school activities do so expecting to get something in return. It was more of transactional involvement. These sorts of contributions rarely lead to increasing parental involvement in decision-making or school governance Marphatia et al., (2010). Others argue that parents play a prominent role in promoting school accountability in the current policy context of decentralisation by serving as decision-makers, Marphatia et al., (2010).

Many studies such as those which were conducted by Pellini, (2005-2007), Shoraku (2008) Nguon (2011), however, found that many parents are of the view that school governance is a technical matter that is best left to those who understand it; and that teaching and learning are 'the business of schools and teachers' and should not be interfered with. Again, community-based stakeholders are intimidated by the territoriality of the school managers coupled with a lack of transparency and accountability. Sometimes the community-based stakeholders feel unwelcome to participate in school management because of the attitude and perception of those entrusted with the task of running the education system (Swift-Morgan, 2006).

According to research findings on Improving Learning Outcomes for Primary School by Action Aid (2010), most community leaders and head teachers, as well as education administrators, see parents as part of the problems rather than as part of the solutions. All this happens even though strong sustained community participation in the management of a local school can enhance transparency and accountability in the education system and promote a sense of ownership, agency, and responsibility for positive change. This negative thinking mainly divorces community stakeholders from deepening their involvement in schools, Marphatia, et al., (2010).

According to Action Aid Malawi(2009, p.10), “Parents, being one of the main community-based stakeholders have a miscued perception about their role in school governance. The majority of parents thought it was not their responsibility to assist in the management of the school as it was the responsibility of the SMCs and PTAs” (p.10).

In Kalangala and Masindi districts of Uganda, stakeholders believe that participation in school management is an exclusive reserve for the elected few, with parents and other stakeholders just being involved only when invited to attend a meeting, Marphatia, (2010). Further, studies by Marphatia, et al., (2010) conducted in four countries; Burundi, Senegal, Malawi and Uganda found that parents feel disappointed with the school management systems as most of the time their decisions are not implemented. It was noted that head teachers, and some other rich and influential members of the community were the most powerful and were the major decision-makers who even appointed members of the SMC which in some cases made them largely unaccountable. This is a recipe for parental mistrust of the people handling school management issues and financial resources.

However, some communities and parents view their role in promoting school accountability as vital in the education of their children. “Some community-based stakeholders especially governing bodies are executing their operations so effectively that they add considerable value to the school’s accountability relationships, including holding the head to account,” Akey,(2012, p.45). Community involvement in the decision-making processes, no doubt plays an important role to boost morale and commitment among the stakeholders, in addition, to creating a greater sense of ownership, Sharma et al., (2004). This view is also shared by Dunne, Mairead, and Akeyeampong& Humphreys., (2007) who contend that communities perceive decentralisation as a motivator that inspires parents to show greater interest in their children’s education.

In support of the preceding argument, it was found that some functioning of the local education offices in Ethiopia was funded by the communities, (Dunne et al.,2007).

Effective decentralisation allows for easy mobilisation and prudent use of resources which undoubtedly has a strong bearing on the overall management of an educational institution. In Ghana, for example, decentralisation helps to enhance the efficiency of school management and accountability, Abebe,(2012).

The studies cited so far implicitly reveal two key issues; firstly, there is apparently little or no civic education conducted on raising the stakeholders' awareness of their critical role in promoting school and educational accountability. Secondly, another glaring issue emanating from the studies is that school administrators and other educational authorities, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) have not been aggressive enough in building the capacity of the community-based stakeholders to capably handle their new roles in school management. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by aiding the community-based stakeholders to understand their role and build capacity in school-based management systems so that they play an active role in monitoring the activities in and around the school environment. To achieve this, the findings of the study would be shared with the community-based stakeholders who might in the process choose to adopt the best practices in community participation in promoting school accountability.

2.7Stakeholders' engagement in school management and decision-making processes

Devolving increased levels of school management and decision-making from head office to schools is one of the principles of democracy. Over two decades ago there has been a major shift toward community participation in decision-making and school management, Mabaso&Themane, (2002), Participative decision-making (PDM) is a desirable current trend and progressive way of making schools more democratic and more efficient; Mokoena, (2011).

Scholars have argued that one of the major drives for embarking on decentralisation and clamouring for community involvement is the need for improving accountability. 'Decentralisation facilitates responsiveness to local needs through community participation, transparency and accountability in school management.' (Dunne et al., 2007, p.9). Akey (2012), further asserts that school accountability is

usually associated with how the little available resources in the education system are managed through efficient and prudent utilisation of such resources to obtain educational objectives amidst scarcity. To understand the purpose of accountability in education, one needs to conceptualise it as a response to ‘the implicit social contract between society and the public school system’ (Fox, 2015). This clearly entails that schools are accountable to the communities in which they operate.

In a bid to enhance school accountability, different models of community participation have been employed. One such approach is to encourage the formation and active functioning of the school-based management (SBM) which promotes the engagement of key stakeholders in the education of learners. Caldwell (2002) defines this as a systematic decentralisation of authority and responsibility for making decisions on important matters regarding school operations in line with the centrally instituted realms of goals, policies, curriculum, educational standards and accountability.

Many variant models of School based management have been practiced in many developed countries such as England, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States of America. Principally school-based management entails the transfer of some sort of power and decision-making-mainly the responsibility for school operations to a combination of the head teacher, teachers, parents, and other school community members, Barrera, Osario, Fasil, & Patrinos, (2009). With this arrangement, the local community is entrusted with the task of playing a greater role in decision-making as regards, learning contents, budgeting, formulating school development and improvement plans, and executing several other duties which ordinarily were handled by the school leadership. However, despite its success stories in developed countries, studies carried out in developing countries on the effectiveness of school-based management showed minimal improvement in education quality, Fullan&Watson, (2000); Ouchi& Segal, (2003); Volansky& Freidman, (2003). But Cornwall, Lucas & Pasteur, (2002), Linn, (2003), and Burke (2005) argue that community participation, apart from its ability to improve education through shared responsibility, further helps not only to enhance school accountability but also other inseparable aspects of accountability such as transparency

and trust among the school and local communities. Undoubtedly, this serves to further strengthen ties and cooperation between educators on one hand and students, parents, administrators, and policy makers on the other.

The head teachers and school administrators can get the communities involved in school activities in a number of ways as per the contextual policy demands, to ensure that schools produce the desired outcomes. According to Fata and Kreng (2015), it is expressly and considered rightly so that communities if backed with the right amount of information, can effectively monitor and evaluate the work of schools and teachers. They can check how the schools and teachers are implementing the national curriculum for the full learning of the students, find out the obstacles that schools and teachers have, and seek out possible solutions. Further, schools also need assistance from the community in developing school improvement and budget plans, Fata and Kreng(2015). Uemera (1999) adds that communities can provide feedback to schools and teachers on their teaching performance which can help to check teachers' absenteeism, and lack of punctuality.

These are serious problems in many parts of the world especially Sub-Saharan Africa. The lack of a monitoring system is one of the contributing factors to this problem. Fata & Kreng (2015) further add that community participation is a highly reliable way of ensuring transparency and therefore a guarantee of school accountability. This view agrees with the findings of Rugh and Bossert (1998) in Uemera (1999) after their extensive examination of six case studies in the Philippines, Kenya, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Columbia, and Bolivia. They drew the conclusion that teachers and other school staff feel they should be more accountable to community clients only when the community holds some power over them; when they either come from the same village and have social ties; if their continued employment or salaries depend on the community satisfaction; or sometimes when community education committees exist to manage the schools and are sometimes empowered to exert their influence, Rugh&Bossert(1998), Uemera, (1999). This correlates with the theory of action of accountability, Amo,(2015), Figlio& Ladd, (2007), and Jacob,(2005) which propounds that holding teachers and educators accountable for student performance (referred to as performance-based

accountability) will motivate them to align behaviours and instructional practices to increase student achievement. Community participation is essentially the blood that sustains the backbone and lifeline of school accountability policies. “Without local level participation and control, even well-thought-out accountability policies will be less effective and sometimes ineffective and harmful.” Loeb & Strunk (2007). For instance, efforts were made in Cambodia by establishing cluster programmes in a bid to lure communities to help schools discharge their duties accountably, Pellin, (2007). Unfortunately just like in many other countries including Malawi, as studies reveal, these efforts did not bear desired fruits owing to inadequate human and financial resources. The principle of community participation is more often fraught with limited financial provisions coupled with insufficient and at times unwilling human resource constraints (Shoraku, 2008).

The models for school accountability through engaging communities in school governance have had a fair share in Africa as well. For instance, in Benin, studies found that community participation was both genuine and artificial for only a few local leaders made the final decision. Community participation which was inspired by the community empowerment initiative in Malawi was only successful in terms of school construction, Rose (2003). This agrees with Nampota and Munthali (2014) who contend that community participation in Malawi in school governance and management, on the whole, has been unsustainable as they are largely involved in construction and fundraising activities. This somehow defeats the policy intention of the Malawi government which through the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) (2008-2017) under priority number 3 emphasises that the ministry of education will mobilise the community to participate in ‘whole school development and management’. According to the amended Education Act (2013), each school should have School Management Committees composed of community members whose function should be to meet regularly, to address school issues such as infrastructure, teacher performance, teacher discipline, quality of teaching, absenteeism, and such other matters that affect the day-to-day running of the school. The Ministry of Education further recommends that each school should have a functional PTA comprising parents and teachers with the community leaders. These are expected to

meet a maximum of four times a year to mobilise communities and hold the school management committee to account thus according to National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management (NSCPPSM, 2004). However, from the literature available, again thus according to NSCPPSM (2004), SMCs and PTAs are largely dormant in management circles which predominantly affects their role in enhancing school accountability.

In cases where decision-making and planning remain under the control of the leaders, central officials, and policy makers, the likelihood of success is often marred. The same scenario played itself in Ghana where school accountability promoted through decentralisation policy hit a snag due to inexperience in decentralised decision-making processes, lack of interest, and high poverty levels of the community members (Chapman et al., 2002).

However, the training by CARE in 2014, proved effective and productive in strengthening School Support Committees (SSC) in their participation, capacity, and awareness of their roles and responsibilities in promoting school accountability in North East Cambodia (Fata&Kreng, 2015).

Clearly, the responsibility of making schools accountable to all key stakeholders is indeed a mammoth task that requires tact and technical abilities (Shoraku, 2008). The studies cited raise key issues worth consideration. Featuring highly is the issue that community participation should not end with the provision of building materials for the construction of classroom blocks and other infrastructure. The community stakeholders need to be consulted and engaged in the processes of school governance and management and can also be used to provide external monitoring and evaluation systems that can greatly boost both the internal and external efficiency of the schools. By carrying out this study, the gap on how exactly community participation can improve school efficiency is going to be addressed by providing checks and balances. The head teachers and teachers will conduct themselves accountable to the students as well as the community.

2.8 Factors enhancing community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability.

To enhance community-based stakeholders' participation in school accountability, Shoraku (2008) shares the same view with Chapman et al, (2002) who recommend not only capacity building for communities to engage in school governance mechanisms successfully but also a holistic approach to training teachers and school directors in basic leadership techniques and community organisational skills. These organisational skills include the formation and use of school budgets, financing, and community organisation. Training local government staff in monitoring, supervising, and assessing school operations were seen as some other critical preconditions for success in Cambodia (Thida & Joy, 2012).

For communities to participate effectively they need to define the goals, policies, programmes, and expectations of the school and the responsibilities and functions of each partner; to encourage shared and more participatory decision-making with both teachers and communities; to plan, organise, conduct and report on meetings; manage and account for government and community resources offered to the school, (Uemera 1999). At school and local levels where there are functioning PTAs and other CBSs, the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities can lead to friction between the groups, (Westhorp, Walker, Roger, Overbeeke, Ball, & Brice, (2014). As observed from the preceding sentences, openness and ability to properly account for resources attract effective participation from the community-based stakeholders whereas the lack of the aforementioned only puts off the members of the community as they tend to lose trust in the school management. According to NEA (2008), engaging more stakeholders is possible by offering training for parents and other community members on effective communication and partnering skills and by ensuring the provision of better information on school and district policies and procedures.

It is further noted that at times there is a mismatch between the National Plan of Actions to decentralise school management and build capacity to manage schools and the acts and regulations followed by the countries which empower education bureaucracy, resulting in

School Management Committees (SMC) playing a rather supportive role other than management roles (Westhorp et al., 2014). Furthermore, School Management Committees and other community members are more likely to function effectively when no significant power differentials exist between committee members and social norms which could inhibit the exercise of community power. Power relations within community-based stakeholders such as PTA, SMC, and others should not be used to exclude others from participation.

Unfortunately in most communities, power seems to be concentrated in the hands of powerbrokers in the PTA and members of staff, much to the exclusion of other parents (Okitsu, 2011). In a study carried out in rural Zambia, Okitsu (2011) noted that albeit outnumbering men in general parent meetings, women rarely spoke and decisions were solely made by men. Perhaps this is where training and capacity building of community-based stakeholders is needed to empower all the members of the community to participate in school governance regardless of sex. This enhances the CBS's effectiveness given the disadvantage community members face relative to teachers, Altischuler & Corrala, (2012); Duflo et al., (2009).

However, it remains to be seen whether lack of experience and training are indeed the major factors hindering effective community stakeholders' participation in school governance issues. The present study will give insight into the question, 'What are the factors that enhance the community-based stakeholders' involvement in school governance and decision-making processes to promote school accountability?'

2.9 Theoretical framework

The study leaned much on the sociological underpinnings of the 'Public Engagement Theory' as propounded by Friedman, Gutnick and Danzberger (1999). The theory advocates for the involvement of all sectors of the community in deliberations to build a common ground and collaboration. "The process of public engagement permits participants, time to consider and discuss an issue in-depth before they converge on a final process" (Warburton et al., 2008).

The theory, therefore, becomes particularly relevant to the study because its tenet requires active and meaningful participation of stakeholders in any undertaking which involves them. The PET in this regard generally seeks and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision. This can be concerning an individual, government, institutions, companies, or any other entities that affect public interests. The principles of public engagement hold that those who are affected by a decision have the right to be involved in the decision-making process. This may be regarded as a way of empowerment and as a vital part of democratic governance. Public engagement is part of ‘people-centered’ or ‘human-centric’ principles which have emerged globally over the last two decades and have had significant bearings on education. Since the PET calls for consultation with stakeholders, the study employed this theoretical framework to reach out to the target audience to gauge if they were involved in the decision-making processes to make an impact on the functionality of the schools. The research questions centre on the tenets of the theoretical framework.

However, there are criticisms levelled against the theory of public engagement. The critics argue that the theory is more cosmetic than real as sometimes consultations are done nominally but the decisions made are rarely a reflection of the discussions. “It is true that due to the most informal status of participatory procedures, public engagement is like any other form of policy advice subject to strategies of instrumentation and can be used as a means of ‘symbolic politics’ (HennenandPfersdorf, 2014). Murphy (2004) lists four factors that weaken the public engagement concept. These include:

Apathy - in which the public has little hope of influencing the decisions leading to low participation levels due to growing frustration with the system. It is also fuelled by the general tendency of exclusion that inadvertently bars certain groups and individuals from participating. Influential citizens dominate participation processes around the world. As a result, forums for public involvement are often dominated by the same people who claim to represent the people while in fact, they represent a privileged minority group of the population.

Self-motivation creeps in; people are predisposed to pursue their interests even if they hold noble intentions to further the public good.

Deficiencies in the public knowledge and abilities in which the public has limited knowledge of its elected representatives and their functions and limited knowledge to participate.

High cost, time-consuming and does not adequately address power imbalances and political considerations which all work to undermine the value of community engagement.

Nonetheless, it is highly important to reiterate that these problems are not a plausible cause to exclude the public or members of the community from influencing decision-making processes; rather they ought to be deemed as key elements that must be effectively managed as part of any holistic management process (Murphy, 2004). Ensuring inclusion, removing seeming biases, and respecting the views of the community can indeed deal with these challenges. Owing to this observation, the theory will essentially still be used in examining the extent of participation the community stakeholders are engaged at all levels of school policy formulation and implementation, and in all other areas of governance according to the dictates of school-based management and decision-making as they relate to school accountability.

2.10 Chapter Summary

The preceding discussion has made a review of the related literature to the current study which among other things has expounded on parental and community participation in school accountability and discussed the meaning of school accountability as it is used in the study. It is evident from the preceding discussion that community participation is one of the reputable and reliable means of ensuring transparency and enhancing accountability.

Notwithstanding this, two key issues have come to the fore; firstly involves the fact that there is little or no civic education conducted to raise awareness about the community-based stakeholders' critical role in promoting education accountability. Secondly, as observed from the other studies reviewed, authorities, school administrators and Non-governmental Organisations have not been vibrant and aggressive enough in building the capacity of the community-based stakeholders to competently discharge their novel roles in school management. The chapter has further explained the concept of community-based stakeholders and how these stakeholders perceive their role in promoting school accountability as well as engaging in school management and decision-making processes. Finally, the chapter has closed with a discussion on the merits and demerits of Public Engagement Theory which is a theoretical framework guiding this study. The next chapter will look at the research designs and methodology employed in this study

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the approach taken to address the research questions of the study. It describes the methodology that was used as well as the design of the study. It also explains the sampling procedure which was employed to select participants' for the study; participant characteristics'; and data generation instruments. This is followed by lessons from the pilot study; the role of the researcher in data generation and data analysis focusing on: data cleaning, organisation, and categorisation; coding; and development of themes; enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. The chapter ends with a discussion on ethical considerations focusing on seeking permission from gatekeepers, obtaining participants' consent, and a discussion on issues of ensuring participants' privacy and confidentiality in this study.

3.2 Research paradigm

The study was also hinged and based on an interpretive theoretical perspective and as such the researcher set out with the assumption that access to reality is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meaning. "It is noted that interpretive studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them" (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables but focuses on the full complexity of human interpretations as the situation emerges (Myers2009).

Consequently, the interpretive nature of the research facilitated a greater understanding of the context under which the communities were engaged in school governance and management in Balaka District bearing in mind that school-based management itself is influenced by the context (Myers (2009). In addition, Stringer (2004) points out that interpretative studies result in detailed, descriptive accounts of people's experiences in

natural settings. Thus, an interpretative paradigm enabled the researcher to delve into the experiences of the participants and to understand what they thought and felt were the factors enabling or hindering community engagement in school-based management. This understanding was crucial in examining the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability.

It is further noted that case studies strive to portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and ‘thick description of participants’ lived experiences of thoughts and feelings for a situation, Morrison et al., (2005). Geertz (1983) points out further that events and situations need to be allowed to speak for themselves rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated, or judged by the researcher. In support, Chambers, (1989) points out that the case study sees life from the point of view of the participants.

Given the preceding, a case study is often deemed as an appropriate methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required, Tellis (1997). However, Tellis (1997) points out that there are three conditions for the design of case studies: (a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary events.

In this study, the type of research questions posed and the degree of focus on contemporary events led to the choice of the case study approach. For example, in this study, there is a “what” question, for instance, What are the factors that enhance the community-based stakeholders’ participation in promoting school accountability? Such types of research questions justify an exploratory study (Tellis, 1997; Soy, 1997). The existence of “how” questions in the interviews made the study explanatory as well, which is not uncommon in qualitative case studies, (Yin, 2003). For example, how do the community-based stakeholders perceive their role in promoting school accountability? In addition, (Tellis (1997) presents applications for a case study model to describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred; to describe the intervention itself, and to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear set of

outcomes. This study is an attempt to describe the real-life situation in which community stakeholders discharge their responsibilities in promoting educational accountability.

3.3 Research design

This study employed a case study design. A case study method is an inquiry that seeks to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not plainly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used, (Yin, 2003). The case study design enabled the researcher to generate insightful data and in-depth experience on the interaction between the community stakeholders and the school authorities as far as community participation is concerned and how it helped in fostering the culture of transparency and accountability. For example, this qualitative data sought to unravel how ordinary community-based stakeholders attended to the day-to-day management of schools. The overall point was to fathom the social and psychological phenomenon from the perspectives of the community-based stakeholders involved, (Groenewald, 2004).

Because of that, the overall approach of this research was a case study in the qualitative paradigm in which an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon was done in its context. Fraenkel & Wallen (2000,p.11) point out that qualitative researchers go to the particular site of interest because they are concerned with the context- they feel that proper understanding of events and activities can best be achieved in the actual settings in which the elements occur. As a result, the study involved the researcher physically visiting the six schools earmarked for this research.

A qualitative case study approach was chosen to look at two cases in six different settings; (a) community-based stakeholders' participation and (b) promoting school accountability derived from different locations in line with the roles of PTA/SMC. The case study approach was chosen because it was felt that it was better placed to facilitate an in-depth exploration of how the community-based stakeholders execute their roles in a bid to promote school accountability in line with the context of school-based management policy.

The specific type of qualitative case study employed in the research was multiple case studies as the research involved more than one case and setting. This proved advantageous to the researcher as it helped him to further explore the differences within and across the cases thereby being able to replicate and determine similarities and differences across the cases. Baxter (2008) points out that a multiple or collective case study allows the researcher to analyse data within each setting and across settings. Herein, the study grouped the cases and data from different locations. The data was viewed as one unit or entity. Stakes (2006), points out that data analyses from the grouped cases can be merged into themes and presented as common concepts from different locations.

3.4 Study area

The case study was carried out in Balaka District. The district has a total of 15 secondary schools, most of them being Community Day Secondary Schools heavily dependent on funds received from the students and community members. Many of these schools are located away from Balaka town except for one conventional secondary school in the district. The district was chosen because it's a place of researcher's convenience for that's where he resides. Fraenkel & Wallen (2000, p. 25) point out that one important aspect which deserves consideration in designing research studies is the issue of feasibility. Apart from research questions themselves being feasible, it is equally significant to think of the study area as well. One should choose an area where research questions can be properly investigated with available resources and therefore less economic stress. Another reason for the choice of Balaka was that the researcher had easy access to information as he could easily move to the interview centres without many economic hurdles. "Studying one's backyard provides easy access to informants and information at a minimal cost" (Creswell, 2012, p. 115)

3.5 Sampling technique

This study used the purposive sampling technique to select groups of community-based stakeholders such as the PTA and Mother Groups. These groups were purposefully selected because they are the ones with direct responsibility in the school and were

therefore deemed appropriate stakeholders to provide in-depth information required in the study. These groups of CBSs came from six post-primary schools which were randomly selected. The names of all 15 potential participant schools were written on a piece of paper which were then folded and placed in two containers. The two containers represented two cluster centres where participating schools were to be drawn from. The containers were then shaken vigorously to let the pieces of paper get mixed up to remove any sort of biasness. The researcher was then tasked to pick six pieces of paper out of the containers; three pieces from each container which later became participating schools in the research study. The schools were randomly selected because the researcher wanted to give each secondary school within the district an equal chance of being chosen as a participant in the study. The sample for this study was taken from some of the community-based stakeholders which included, the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and Mother Groups from six different schools. Three of the schools were from the same cluster centre while the other three belonged to the other cluster centre. Generally, all these schools boast of very vibrant and active Parent Teacher Associations and Mother Groups, however, in some schools the Mother Groups and School Management Committees were somehow inactive. This impacted heavily on the study because, in most of these schools where the MGs were passive, the researcher resorted to only dealing with the Parents Teachers' Association as the only stakeholders to provide needed information in the study. The members of PTA and MG were involved in the study because they are the ones that provide leadership that links the school to the wider community. They can easily mobilise the community to participate in school management issues. These categories of research participants were purposively chosen because the researcher rightly believed that they are the ones with the right information and therefore in a better position to offer the required data needed to answer the research questions (Fraenkel et al., 2000).

3.6 Data Generation Instruments

What follows in this sub-section is the discussion of data generation methods and instruments. Focus Group Discussion (FGD), One-to-one interviews, and document analysis were used to generate data in this study through an interview guide that

contained questions for all the gatekeepers. The questions were formulated before the interface sessions with the participants.

3.6.1 Focus Group Discussion

Data was generated qualitatively through the use of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in the case of students and members of the governing bodies (PTAs and MGs). This was considered appropriate as it would help to provide much information on the phenomenon being investigated. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), define a Focus Group Discussion as a group interview where the moderator seeks to focus a group discussion on specific themes of research interest. Focus group discussion was herein used to allow participants to provide extra information beyond what they initially could have said upon hearing other participants' responses. However, despite the advantage of eliciting additional information, FGD has its own pitfalls. It is noted that some people like to keep to themselves and thus feel uncomfortable in a group setting and nervous about speaking before a sizable group. Further to that, not everyone can contribute and others may just counter-argue for the sake of it or just contaminate an individual's points (Dawson, 2002, p.29). To mitigate these challenges, participants were advised to have mutual respect. In-depth discussions with members of PTAs, Mother Groups, and head teachers were conducted for purposes of data triangulation. Snow & Anderson (2006) assert that triangulation can occur with data, theories, and even methodologies with a view of helping to create and establish the credibility and worthiness of the study.

3.6.2 One-to-one Interview

In this study, one-to-one interviews were used to generate data from head teachers who were involved in the study. A number of six head teachers who under their position and policy requirement act as secretaries of the PTA were interviewed on different days in this study. Their responses were coded and developed into themes which were then fused with the ideas from responses generated from FGDs conducted with members of the PTA and Mother Groups. Each interview took about 25 to 30 minutes.

Creswell (2012) defines a one-to-one interview, as a data generation process whereby the investigator asks questions and records responses from only one participant in the investigation. By the nature of their job and position, one-to-one interview was a convenient type of interview to use for the head teachers since there is only one head teacher at an institution.

More importantly, a qualitative one-to-one interview design is appropriate for the exploratory research questions used in this study. As the approach emphasises the importance of human experiences in a particular social context. When a researcher removes an event, social action, and answers to questions or conversation from its social context, meaning and significance are often distorted (Neuman, 2000). Now, to examine the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability in secondary education, researchers must thus talk with and observe people who hold a stake in this enterprise within the confinement of their communities (Sharma, et al., 2004).

Just like other forms of interviews, this type of interview is advantageous in that it provides useful information when one cannot directly observe participants, and it allows participants to describe detailed personal information. In addition, the interviewer has better control over the sort of information obtained since he or she can ask specific questions to elicit the information (Creswell, 2012). In this study, qualitative data was generated through the structured interview which contained both open and closed-ended questions to address the issue of public engagement in promoting school accountability.

However, Creswell (2012) notes that besides being a time-consuming and expensive approach, a one-to-one interview is a method ideal for interviewing individual participants who are willing to speak, who are articulate and conversant with issues, and who can share ideas comfortably. But it was not likely possible that all of the community-based group leaders included in the interview during the study could share these characteristics. The absence of these attributes would have had an adverse impact on the study. The interview would have been doomed to failure and the purpose would not have been achieved. In this regard, focus group discussion helped to bring together people who had various attributes

in one place. This helped to generate the needed data for the study. In a bid to obtain data that was worthwhile and reliable, one that was not deceptive and which did not provide the perspective the interviewees wanted the researcher to hear, the use of document analysis was employed to verify the responses from the participants.

3.6.3 Document Analysis

In this study, care was taken to ensure that information provided by respondents was trustworthy. This was done by cross-checking the responses with documents attesting to the authenticity of the same. Mainly, the study relied on the minutes of the meetings. The challenge was that, in some institutions, these documents were not available. Only two schools were able to provide the minutes. Going through the minutes it was firmly established that CBSs were largely engaged in matters to do with infrastructural development. “Documents consist of public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain about a site or participants in a study, and they can include newspapers, minutes of a meeting, personal journals and letters”(Punch, 2005). This study solicited the minutes of meetings where the role and other matters affecting the participation of community-based stakeholders in the promotion of school accountability were addressed.

Document analysis is an important source of information in qualitative research (Punch, 2005). It provides an alternative source of data which increases the reliability and trustworthiness of data. In addition, documents represent thoughtful data, in that participants have given attention to compiling them. Although documents are important tools for generating data, they have some limitations. Yin (2003) observes that documents may be protected information unavailable to public or private access; the reports follow a format that caters to that organisational needs and are not presented in the manner the researcher would have preferred. Furthermore, documents may not be authentic or accurate. An example could be the minutes of the school committee where the board and/or committee members rarely verify them for accuracy (Creswell,2012). In circumstances where such documents were available, the minutes were first presented to the respondents who vouchsafed for their authenticity before using them as a source of information in the study.

3.7 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in two schools namely, Livirizi and Matola Community Day Secondary Schools. Both of these schools are within Balaka District and were selected simply because of their proximity to the researcher. The schools helped the investigator to try out the data gathering instrument by interviewing the head teachers of the schools, five pupils from each school, and members of Mother Groups and the Parent Teacher Associations during the pilot phase of the study.

Two key issues emerged from the pilot study. The first one involved the fact that community participation was deemed relevant by the stakeholders despite the feeling that school authorities sidelined them when it came to implementation of the activities which in away made things difficult to come to fruition. The second issue was the idea that community-based stakeholders were largely unaware of the roles they could take in promoting school accountability though they had often murmured that the school principals were not transparent in their dealings which raised suspicions. The outcome of the pilot study helped the researcher to refine the questions.

Piloting the interview schedule guide largely helped to check the clarity of the questions and to determine whether the instruments could collect the intended data during the main study. As Soy (1997) puts it, a pilot site needs to be chosen to pilot a data gathering instrument so that problematic areas can be uncovered and corrected. The feedback from the pilot study certainly assisted the researcher to rearrange the sequence of questions and also removing those that could not help the researcher to get appropriate responses for the study.

3.8 The role of the researcher in data generation

During the focus Group Discussion sessions, the researcher was engaged in taking down notes as a backup to the recording of the interview. Dawson (2002) observes that a researcher needs to take down field notes. Field notes are the researcher's main way of recording data. In addition, the researcher audio-recorded the proceedings using an ITEL P33 plus smartphone upon consent from the individual participants involved in the study.

Audio-recording helped to reduce the amount of time for each interview session which ranged from 30 to 50 minutes for Mother Groups and 45 to 60 minutes in case of the Parent Teacher Associations.

3.9 Data analysis

As the study squarely bordered on a qualitative case study, data analysis involved a detailed description of what participants said among other things: reading through all the data captured; organising and preparing the data for analysis and interpretation of the data. Basically, data analysis is a process involving examining, sorting, categorising, evaluating, comparing, synthesising, and contemplating the coded data, as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data (UNESCO (1999) and Fraenkel et al., (2000)). As a result, analysing qualitative data essentially involved synthesising the information the researcher generated from the interviews and official documents into a coherent description of the study outcome.

Although some percentages and figures may appear in the discussion, these were used mainly to clarify specific details about the phenomenon under investigation (Fraenkel et al., 2000) and not in an inferential sense. Otherwise, data analysis in this study was largely dependent on the description of what participants shared with the researcher during interview sessions.

The process included: reading through the notes; listening several times from the audio material and transcribing each participant's audio material separately until all participants' relevant audio material was transcribed. The transcribing of texts focused on how individual participants responded to each question during the interview. In addition, official documents especially minutes of the meetings were also scrutinised to extract those elements that were relevant to answering the research questions.

3.9.1 Data cleaning, organisation and categorisation

The transcribed audio material was word-processed and hard copies of each participant's audio data were produced. Data cleaning was done by reading and re-reading the transcribed data on hard copies and removing data that was not useful for answering the research questions posed. Official documents like minutes of the SMC's and PTA's meetings were also examined. The organisation of the data was done by sorting and arranging the data into different categories depending on how participants responded to the main questions or sub-questions. In the study, similar things reported by participants were put together and formed categories thus; similar participants' views or sentiments were grouped and presented as findings. These findings eventually facilitated a discussion in an organised manner.

3.9.2 Coding

Coding is the process by which responses are classified into meaningful categories thus according to Nachmias & Nachmias (1996). In this study participants' responses were assigned labels to help the researcher link similar ideas that later formed themes or concepts. Silverman (2014) points out that these labels can range from descriptions to concepts. This enabled the researcher to identify and find similarities and relationships among data from various centres.

3.9.3 Development of themes

Parallel views from different participants formed categories. Categories that expressed a broader view/opinion formed themes that appeared as major findings of the study. To come up with the themes, the qualitative data were first of all read and categorised to make a preliminary observation. Secondly, the identification of themes was put into gear by looking closely at the data in the process of making a list of all the themes. Thirdly the list of the themes and coding scheme that applied to the data was then developed. The coding scheme began the moment the initial data was collected so as to capture significant concepts within the data set. In coding, portions of data were separated from their original context and grouped so that all data bearing the same theme were extracted and studied together. This approach is also advanced by (Given,2008).

3.9.4 Enhancing credibility and trustworthiness

As a way of ensuring and establishing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, several sources of data validation were employed in the study which among others included:

3.9.5 Triangulation

In this study, the need for triangulation arose from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes in the study to strengthen the research findings and conclusions (Soy, 1997). This required the use of multiple pieces of evidence from myriad sources to uncover convergent lines of inquiry thereby promoting both dependability and trustworthiness (Tellis, 1997). Thus in this study data from interviews was cross-checked with that from the document analysis.

3.9.6 Peer review

To further consolidate and cement the credibility and worthiness of the study, open peer review was employed as another source of validating the study. Three independent researchers rigorously assessed the originality, validity, and significance of the study.

3.9.7 Use of participants' verbatim quotes

This was another reliable means of ensuring the credibility and worthiness of the study. The researcher widely used the participants' verbatim quotes to validate the findings. These quotes, which came from both one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions were carefully scrutinised and compared to establish the general themes emanating from the participants.

3.9.8 Pilot study

This was used in order to find out the feasibility of the study. It helped a great deal in testing the data generation methods which were designed for use in the study, and refining the research questions so as to generate the right information needed in the main study. Further, it assisted in ensuring the credibility and worthiness of the study by testing

and refining the purpose, study designs, and processes. So in essence, it was also used as another source of establishing the credibility and worthiness of the study.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The study took into consideration the following; seeking permission from the gatekeepers, obtaining consent from participants; and ensuring that their privacy and confidentiality were strictly observed throughout the process of the whole investigation, data analysis, and presentation.

3.11 Seeking permission from gatekeepers

Prior to the data generation process, consent was sought from authorities. The process ethically started by obtaining a formal letter of introduction from the Head of Education Foundations Department in the School of Education at Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi which was then presented to the Education Division Manager in the South East Education Division (SEED), District Education Manager (Balaka) and head teachers of the schools involved in the research study.

The letter bore the researcher's full particulars including the topic of the study and its purpose. It was presented to the gatekeepers who then in turn were asked to allow the researcher to generate data for the research study in question. No one was coerced into participating in the study. All participants were involved out of their choice to do so. Participation was absolutely based on the free choice of the individuals.

3.12 Solicitation of informed consent

The respondents were informed of the purpose of the study: that as a partial requirement for the fulfillment of the M.Ed. Programme in the School of Education, the researcher was required to carry out academic research whose purpose was to examine the Role of Community-Based Stakeholders in Promoting School Accountability. Therefore the generation of data commenced and proceeded only with those participants who willfully consented to be involved in the research study.

3.13 Privacy and confidentiality

Participants in this study were assured of confidentiality and anonymity by informing them that any information collected about individual participants would be treated without an attachment or reference to their names. As a result, each participant was identified by a code which was a combination of a letter and a number.

3.14 Limitations of the study

Given the limited time available, it was difficult to get a representative sample of the members of the PTA per school in one place for the Focus Group Discussions. This was compounded by the fact that the members lived in different locations pursuing various activities for their subsistence. However, in the event of such an occurrence, measures were employed to mitigate the challenge. One such mitigation was to have a one-to-one interview with the concerned individuals. They were tracked and interviewed at their convenient places. Another limiting factor of the study was the high probability that some of the questions were not understood as they contained technical terms used in the guidelines on the roles of stakeholders. To mitigate this, the researcher offered explanations during in-depth and Focus Group Discussions.

3.15 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the qualitative case study method which was employed in this research. It has also described the design of the study focusing on: sampling technique; participant characteristics; and data generation instruments. Qualitative data was generated using an interview guide that contained both open and closed-ended questions. The sample for the study was drawn from some of the community-based stakeholders such as the Parent Teachers' Association and Mother Groups taken from schools that were randomly selected.

The chapter has established that data was generated qualitatively through the use of Focus Group Discussion which was considered appropriate in soliciting much detailed information on the investigated phenomena. In addition, document analysis was also used to generate data. The aim was to have credible and trustworthy information through

triangulation, peer review, use of participants' verbatim quotes, and pilot study; methods which were used to mitigate shortfalls of over-reliance on one method of data generation. Credibility and trustworthiness were therefore ensured through triangulation, peer review, participants' verbatim quotes, and a pilot study. Seeking permission from gatekeepers, solicitation of informed consent, and privacy and confidentiality were the key ethical issues that were adhered to throughout the study. The next chapter deals with the presentation of the findings and discussion on the Role of Community-Based Stakeholders in Promoting School Accountability.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter overview

In this study, an examination of the role of Community-Based Stakeholders in Promoting School Accountability was carried out in sampled schools that are within the jurisdictions of Traditional Authority Sawali and Msamala in Balaka District. The presentation and its subsequent discussions of the findings on several issues such as; the perceptions of community-based stakeholders of their role in school accountability, their engagement in management issues, the kinds of management and decision-making processes they mainly get involved in, and how they promote active and meaningful community participation are discussed. Further, the chapter highlights how the community-based stakeholders ensure that school management implements the set standards where such is the case, and also unravels the factors that promote or hinder community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability. All these are explored here, following the research questions that guided the study.

This study examined the results of research on the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability which was conducted in May 2017 in six secondary schools within Balaka District.

The delegation of decision-making powers from the central government to provincial, district, and community levels has been a worldwide phenomenon, all in an effort to improve the accountability of service providers and increase the effectiveness of the resource allocations and utilization for improved performance. In recognition of its usefulness, the Malawi government through the National Education Sector Plan (NESP 2007-2017) affirms its commitment to devolving the school governance thus communities were given powers to participate in the running of the schools within their communities.

The key research questions which were examined in this study included the following:

- (a) Main question: What should be the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability?
- (b) Subsidiary research questions
 1. How do the community-based stakeholders perceive their role in promoting school accountability?
 2. How are the community-based stakeholders engaged in school management and decision-making processes which promote school accountability?
 3. What are the factors that enhance the community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability?

To investigate these questions, this study first described the research method used including sampling, assessment, and analysis. The study then examined the factors that encouraged or hindered communities in their participation in various school activities.

4.2 Preliminary findings

This presents a summary of the biographic data of the participants. Before answering the research questions all participants had to talk about their age, academic qualification, and experience or number of years they had been in the groups of the sampled community-based stakeholders.

4.2.1 Age, gender and educational background of the research participants

All participants in the sample were asked about their background characteristics such as age, educational background and their level of academic attainment to establish whether they were able to understand and articulate issues to do with community participation in schools and its subsequent contribution to promoting accountability in schools. After gathering bio-data, all participants were asked if they at one point in time before or soon after being ushered into the office of representing other parents were trained on how they were to execute their work in providing that needed link between the school and the community in which the schools operate.

It was observed and was therefore evidently clear from the Focus Group Discussions, that in most schools visited the issue of gender representation was strictly adhered to in that the Parents Teachers' Associations were a composition of both sexes. For instance, at one school, the composition of PTA in terms of gender was five (5) men and four (4) women thus indicating that 55% of the positions were taken by men and 45% were female. This kind of arrangement as would be graphically presented later herein, was also evident in some other schools that were visited for the same purpose.

4.3 PTA composition and membership

The study found that once instituted, the composition of the PTA in all the schools visited was as follows: Chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer, secretary, and committee members. It was also observed that most of the schools visited had a strong interest in the issues of gender representation as the positions in the PTA and other groups were distributed across both gender spectrums.

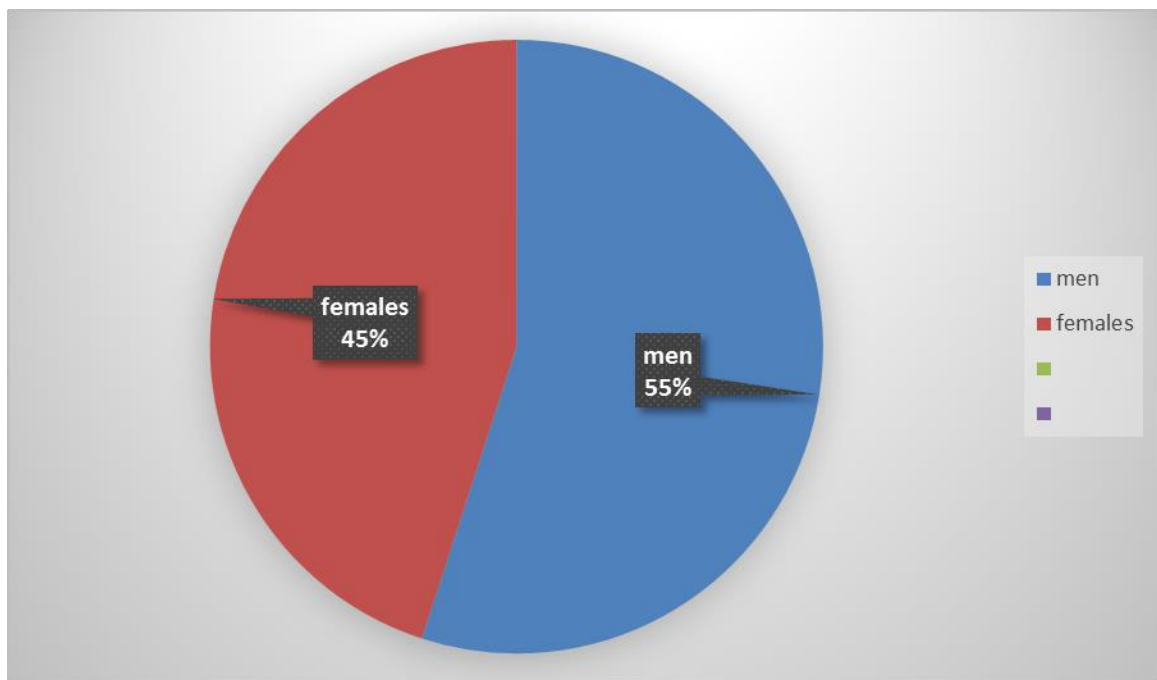


Figure 1: A pie chart showing the composition of PTA at one of the study sites

PTA composition by gender: These stakeholders' groups also highly considered the issue of inclusion in that the committees formed constituted of a mixture of both young and old individuals as observed from the data generated. Most of the committees had members ages ranging from thirty to sixty years (30-60 years). Only 2% of the schools had committee members of age starting from thirty to fifty-four (30-54) age ranges.

On educational qualification, the researcher noted that most of the participants in the Focus Group Discussion who held positions in PTA had some form of academic qualifications. Over 50% of the participants were in possession of the Malawi School Certificate of Education while only two (2) of the participants possessed a Junior Certificate of Education. This represented 22 % of the total participants. With the exclusion of the heads who are the automatic members of the PTA, there was only one who had an academic qualification higher than the Malawi School Certificate of Education. The head of the institution assumes the position of the secretary but for the purpose of this study, all heads in all schools were excused from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to allow the participants to express themselves freely.

One of the questions sought to establish how various members came to hold offices in The PTA or Mother Groups which are the common and active community-based stakeholders' groups in the communities. It was noted through the study that all the members holding positions to run the affairs of the groups on behalf of the local communities were elected by the parents. Asked how each of them became members of the PTA or Mother Group, the members had this to say:

Ife tinalowa mu komitiyi titasankhidwa pa chisankho chomwe chinachitika mwabata ndi chilungamo. Makolo anaitanidwa kumsonkhano wa pa chaka komwe amakambirana zinthu zambiri ndipo chimodzi mwazochitika pa tsikuli ndi masankho a komiti ya makolo ndi aphunzitsi.

[We assumed the various positions in the committee through elections that were free and fair. Parents were invited to a meeting held annually to discuss various issues affecting the running of the school and how to

mitigate the factors for the school to provide quality education to our children. Usually one of the items on the agenda of such meetings is the election of the new office bearers for the PTA' (ParticipantC9, FGD 3, held on 30/03/17]

The only difference noted was in the duration the members held positions from school to school. In some schools once elected members held the positions for three (3) years while in other schools the positions rotated every year. At a certain school, one member admitted that he had been in office for four solid years and remarked:

I am the longest serving member in this group. This is the fourth year on the committee while at one time the rest of my colleagues opted out when things became unbearable due to poor working relationships with the school management, I stayed on. Since that time there had never been another meeting to elect new office bearers apart from the one which ushered this committee into office.(Participant C5, FGD 3 held on. 30/03/17).

4.4 Perceptions of community-based stakeholders of their role in school accountability

The discussion herein centres on how the community-based stakeholders perceive their roles in the promotion of school accountability. It highlights the significance of Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), and Mother Groups (MGs).

The study found that the community-based stakeholders have a positive understanding of the role and significance of Parent Teacher Associations, and Mother Groups in taking on an active role in running the affairs of the school.

4.4.1 Significance of community-based stakeholders

Participants in different centres agreed on the importance of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability. One of the participants at Centre B highlighted that;

PTA kwa ife ndigulu lolandiridwa komanso lodalilika lomwe liri ndikuthekera kupititsa patsogolo mugwirizano pakati pa magulu osiyanasiyana otenga nawo gawo kapena ali ndi chidwi pa maphunziro. Ubale pakati pa atsogoleri a sukulu ndi makolo, aphunzitsi ndi makolo komanso ophunzira utha kukhala bwino ngati tingagwire limodzi ntchito

[To us PTA is an acceptable and reliable agent if used properly to enhance cooperation between or among various groups of stakeholders such as, between school management and parents, teachers and parents or learners (Participant B2, FGD 2, held on 22/03/17)].

This finding resonates with Carneiro et al., (2015) who contend that a combination of school autonomy, students' learning assessment, and greater accountability to parents and other stakeholders brought better learning performance by students. However, it was established through the study that improved performance of the learners largely depended on the level and participation of the community, that is, how much power is devolved to the community. Bruns et al., (2011) outline four levels of community participation which include the following:

- a. Budgeting, this looked at whether or not the community is involved in budget formation and allocation.
- b. Personnel management; is the community engaged in the appointment and dismissal of teachers and other support staff to aid in enhancing the goals of the school.
- c. Pedagogy and educational content; is mainly concerned with curriculum development, making of class schedules and school calendar and events, and selection of textbooks and other teaching and learning aids.
- d. School infrastructure and maintenance: thus construction and improvement of buildings and other infrastructure, procurement of other materials, and monitoring and evaluation of teaching performance and students learning achievements.

In areas where the community is directly involved in the running of more than three of these levels at a school, pupils are more likely to attend classes and rarely

abscond from classes as the community acts as their watchdog. With this, comes the improved achievement of scholarly work. “Of late, there have been suggestions that there is an indirect positive relationship between community participation and learning achievements of pupils through improved school management in Malawi” (Taniguchi and Hirakawa 2016, p.19)

Another participant from the same centre commented;

Ichi ndi chinthu chofunikira kwambiri chomwe chingapititse patsogolo chitukuko, kupereka maganizo othandiza kupititsa patsogolo sukulu ndipons okulimbikitsa achinyamata kupititsa patsogolo chikhalidwe. Pambali pa izi chimabweretsa khalidwe labwino kwa aphunzitsi komanso ana asukulu pozindikira kuti makolo ndi ena ambiri ali nd ichidwi pa zochitika za pa sukulu.

[It is a worthwhile entity that can accelerate development, offer productive inputs, and encourage the youth to promote culture. It also enhances the good conduct of both teachers and the students at a learning institution.] – (Participant B5, FGD 2, held on 22/03/17).

The finding resonates well with the theory of Public Engagement which advocates for the involvement of all sectors of the community in running community entities to build common ground and cooperation (Warburton et al., 2008). From the findings, it is evident that the community-based stakeholders have positive perceptions of their role and are eager to enhance community participation in the promotion of school accountability. This positive disposition and great enthusiasm from the community-based stakeholders can only be heightened if the school management makes deliberate efforts to engage the CBSs in activities that bring forth transparency and accountability. There is no other benefit that can result from this engagement other than increased attendance of pupils in school and resultant high attainment of educational goals.

These findings agree with the conclusions from Bruns et al., (2011) who carried out studies in Latin America on the Impact of Community Participation on school achievement. They found empirical evidence that community participation had positive impacts on increased attendance of pupils and teachers and pupils' learning achievements. This finding again resonates quite well with the theory of "Public Engagement" a theoretical framework guiding this study that advocates for 'community inclusiveness' to yield positive results in promoting school accountability.

4.4.2 Training of community-based stakeholders

In all the schools visited, it was established that 98% of the respondents had not attended any training or briefing on the management of PTA/ Mother Group. They mostly run the affairs of PTA or Mother Group on their intuition which mostly compromises their work. It was pointed out that ignorance of their roles and areas of jurisdiction more often results in failure to competently tackle some aspects thereby affecting how best they can contribute effectively to promoting school accountability.

On whether the community-based stakeholders such as the members of the PTA or Mother Groups had been offered formal training on how to carry out their duties, the majority of the participants had this to say;

Ife chisankhidwireni kuti tiyendetse committee yathuyi, palibe amene anaphunzitsidwapo pa za kayendetsedwe ka PTA kapena mmen etizigwirira ntchito zathu.

[Since we were elected to run the PTA, none of us has ever been trained on how to manage the committee or how to discharge our duties', said one of the participants at Centre A [Participant A1, FGD 1 on 16/03/17] as the rest of the participants unanimously agreed with her.

It was the same story at all centres except centre D where only the chairperson of the PTA who had served in that capacity for four solid years admitted being invited at one

time to training where upon completion, the trainees were told to train others in their respective schools. However, the training in the schools did not materialise for unexplained reasons. This lack of training acts as an obstacle to successful community participation in promoting school accountability. Training of the CBSs has been proved to be effective and useful in increasing their participation, capacity, and awareness of their roles and responsibilities,(Fata& Kreng,2015, p.12).

The participants further admitted that they had not even been allowed to visit schools that have vibrant PTAs both within and outside the district. Most participants were quick to add that this lack of training seriously hampered their work because they are not aware of their rights, roles, and responsibilities.

From the preceding discussion, one thing plainly clear is that there is a general lack of training and capacity building not only amongst most members of the community-based stakeholders but also school managers, a development which unfortunately basically acts as a great impediment to smooth operations of the CBSs in their quest to contribute effectively in the process and implementation of school accountability measures. Further, it works retrogressively against the tenets of the Public Engagement theory as it fails to empower the community members to take an active role in matters that affect school accountability. Undoubtedly, this lack of training and capacity building kind of disenfranchises the community-based stakeholders from executing their rightful roles as partners in ensuring that school accountability prevails in various communities despite the available policy provisions that endorse and emphasise community engagement in school-based management.

The theme emerging herein agrees with (Chapman et al., 2002) who contend that the success of the school accountability promoted through decentralisation policy most often hit a snag largely because of improper or general lack of training and capacity building, inexperience in decentralised decision-making processes, lack of interest and high poverty levels of the community members among others. From this finding, it is notably clear that lack of training is one of the major community-based stakeholders'

impediments to deepening their engagement in the management of schools so as to enhance transparency and accountability.

It makes them shun performing certain roles which are within their sphere due to ignorance of what they are supposed to do and how to go about it, subsequently leading to confusion and friction among the community-based stakeholders. If there are no clearly defined boundaries in their roles and responsibilities at a school or local level where there is vibrant functioning PTA, antagonism between the groups is easily set in motion which can further threaten the community's participation in school management (Westhorpe et al, 2014).

4.5 Community-Based Stakeholders' engagement in management issues

The discussion in this sub-area focuses on the kind of management issues the community-based stakeholders are mainly involved in. Through the findings it was revealed that in most schools community engagement is largely cosmetic, most of the time the participation is in issues to do with construction works, as members of the communities are not much involved in the implementation of the activities to do with finances. In most schools visited, consultations are done but school authorities do not feel the need to incorporate members of the community in seeing to it that the resolutions made are adhered to as agreed at the consultative meetings.

It was however established in the study that in a handful of schools, The Parents Teachers' Associations and other community-based stakeholders are involved in management and decision-making processes. The study revealed that in these schools, the authorities were open and consultative. They engaged the community-based stakeholders through management meetings mostly convened at the beginning of each school term. In these meetings decision-making processes were collaborative efforts; however, implementation of such decisions somehow left a lot to be desired. The preceding finding plainly supports the views of the critics of PET who argue that the theory is more cosmetic than real as sometimes consultations are done nominally and the decisions made are rarely a reflection of the discussions (Hennen and Pfersdorf, 2014). This was

evidenced through the comments of some participants and the minutes of the meetings. For instance, at school F, a member remarked;

Inde, akuluakulu a sukulu amadzindikira kufunikirakwa PTA pa nkhani ya kayendetsedwe ka sukulu. Nthawi zambiri timatenga nawo gawo pomanga fundo zoyendetsera sukulu. Mwa chitsanzo poyamba pa chigawo chilichonse cha sukulu amatifunsa maganizo athu momwe zinthu ziyendere komanso woyang'anira sukulu amamasuka kugawana nafe zinthu zofunikira zokhuza kayendetsedwe kasukulu.

[Yes the school management recognises us (PTA) as the important stakeholder in the affairs of the school and we are often allowed to take part in the decision-making. At the beginning of every term, we are consulted. The management feels free to share with us vital information pertaining to the running and organisation of the school.][Participant F7, FGD 6 held on 11/05/17].

From the evidence obtained, it is observed that the Public Engagement theory is put into practice in these setups. The PET, a theoretical framework informing the study advocates for the active involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making processes of all issues that affect them. The finding of the study is in line with this theoretical framework. This finding corroborates with the study by Nishimura(2017), on the role of parents and teachers in improving children's learning which found that in most developing countries, there has been a shift to adopt the short route of accountability which is ensured by forming a school management committee or school board that consists of representatives of parents, community members plus a head teacher to discuss the school plan and challenges facing the school to collaboratively improve the quality of education (Nishimura, 2017).

This information was corroborated in various other schools where 66% of the combined total number of participants in the schools visited, admitted that they were usually

consulted and together with the school management, they made decisions on vital issues. Some participants at the centres had this to say;

Kunena zoonu mabwana apa sukulupa ndiye amayesesa kutiyitana kudzakhala naw opazokambirana za momwe angayendetsere sukulu. Zinthu zambiri zikamachitika amatifotokozera ndikutipempha kuti tiyikepo maganizo athu

[Well to say the truth, authorities do try to engage us. Most often we are invited to attend meetings to discuss how the school should be run. We are informed of the developments happening around and we are encouraged to put forward our suggestions on various issues. [Participant D5, FGD 4 on 05/04/17].

In contrast, the other 17 % of the schools visited claimed that they were not involved. In most cases, they were simply told what the management had decided to embark upon. There was hardly any chance or room to make contributions or give their input on matters affecting the affairs of the school. This revealed that the consultations which were made were mainly superficially aimed at hoodwinking community-based stakeholders that they are part and parcel of the decision-making processes. This corresponds with what Fata & Kreng (2015, p.11) found in their study in Asian countries that schools largely failed to genuinely engage communities in decision-making processes, thereby creating pseudo-participation from communities in school administration.

Again, according to the participants, the school authorities seemed to have little regard for the community-based stakeholders' input but were only interested in advancing their agenda; a situation that made the CBSs have a low opinion of themselves heightened suspicions of the management's motives and poor perception of the need to fully engage in school accountability. At one centre, the participants had this to say.

Ife pano sitinganene kuti amationa ngati ofunikuira ayi. Kutiyitana kwake sikumakhala koti tipangire limodzi ganizo loyendetsera sukulu, amakhala

kuti zonse apanga kale okha, sipamakhala mwayi wotindikuikapo maganizo oti atengedweyi, ife amangotiuza zothaitha basi

[We can't say we are consulted or engaged in the running of the school as most of the time we are invited to simply be told what they have already planned, there is hardly any chance to contribute or give our inputs on matters affecting the school. [Participant E7, FGD 5 on 13/04/17].

This somehow corroborated with what the other 17 % of the participants lamented that the management's consultation of the community-based stakeholders is somehow superficially skewed as they are only consulted when they are about to initiate or commence a project which requires parents to dig deep into their pockets. But once the funds have been generated, they are never told how that money has been used or given the breakdown of items purchased. There is a significant gap between the community-based stakeholders and the school authorities in getting information about how the management spends the funds collected from the communities. This notion was also echoed by participants at centre F who made the following comments:

Panotu ndi ahedi ndi aphunzitsi awo, omwe amapang amfundo zoti achite ndi ndalama ngakhale zomwe ndalama makolo asonkha. Sitinamvepo olo kuona kuti mmodzi wa if ewaitanidwa kapena kuti wakhala nawo pa zokambirana za momwe ndalama zigwiritsidwire ntchito. Pokhapokha pa kakhala vuto loti akufuna ndalama zoti makolo asonkhe apo, eee! Nde ayitana. Koma akatero satiuzanso kuti ndalamazo zakwana zingati zomwe zatoleledwa ndipo zagwira bwanji ntchito. Ife timangokhala ngati makasu basi

[It's only the head teacher and the teachers who decide what to do with the funds parents contribute. We have never heard or seen any one of us being invited to discuss how the school ought to be run. The only time we hear of such pleas or invitations for community participation is when the school needs money but even in such circumstances, the PTA does not know the

full amount collected and what amount has been used for what purpose. We see ourselves as rubber stumps in that regard.[Participant F3, FGD6 on 11/05/17].

4.5.1 Kinds of management and decision-making processes the community stakeholders mainly get involved in

The study found that the community-based stakeholders were principally involved in a number of activities to do with infrastructural development which ranges from, the construction of hostels, teachers' houses, brick fences, toilets, and drilling of boreholes as a way of ensuring water availability to purchasing of water tanks. The study, however, revealed that communities hardly participated in designing school development plans and many other activities related to monetary transactions such as budget formulation and allocation, procurement of teaching and learning materials, as well as building materials. This finding makes PET more relevant and material in that it propagates involvement of all sectors of the community in order to build and enhance collaboration and common ground. The study uncovered that there were a number of things that the schools did perform well, however, there were some important roles and responsibilities that were often ignored especially in the areas of financial transparency either due to management's intention or ignorance of the community-based stakeholders. This is consistent with the results of the study by Fata & Kreng (2015) who contends that most of the community members were concerned about transparency inside schools as the management never bothered to report the available budget and expenditures to the communities and other stakeholders.

On community involvement in decision-making and management processes, various members in different centres made the following remarks:

Nthaw izambiri ife a committee timatenga nawo gawo lalikulu pa ntchito yotukula pa sukulu maka pa kumanga kapena kuonjezera midadada ya makalasi, nyumba za aphunzitsi, malo ogona ophunzira, maka achitsikana pofuna kuwateteza mzambiri. Timamanganso zimbuzi, kuthandizira kumanga mpanda wa njerwa pofuna kupereka chitetezo kwa ana asukulu

komanso katundu wa pasukulu,said most of the participants in different centres.

In addition, the participants said the PTAs are also deemed important when the school administration feels the need to raise fees as was echoed by the members in the sampled schools.

It was also noted that in some schools the PTA is given the duty of assessing needy students to be put on bursaries. Responding to why this was necessary; the participants hinted that the arrangement was deemed appropriate because the PTAs are the ones that live with the students in the communities so they are better placed to identify those in dire need. This arrangement was somehow faulted as it had a high likelihood to be a potential source of bias in itself as it lacked transparency on how the community-based stakeholders were to come up with names devoid of some personal attachments. Most of the CBSs did not have clear written guidelines on how to go about the selection of beneficiaries and in some cases, it was indirectly hinted that some influential members, kind of imposing their decisions on the final list submitted to the institutions for bursary consideration and subsequent eventual offer of the same. The revealed setback concurs with the notion of Hennen & Pfersdorf, (2014), that forums for public involvement are often dominated by the same influential people who claim to represent the people while in essence they are self-serving and stand for a privileged or favoured group of the population.

Another critical area, the community-based stakeholders reported to be involved in at the school level was disciplinary cases and overseeing the provision of other equally important learning and teaching resources.

We also get involved in solving disciplinary cases, provision, and repair of materials such as desks, classroom floors, roofing and fixing of toilet doors, advocating for girls rights where we seek to create and provide a conducive learning environment where there is no discrimination, especially against girls.[Participants C6, FGD 3 held on 30/03/17].

4.5.2 CBS's role in promoting active and meaningful community participation

At centre A, participants reported that the PTA is at the forefront in encouraging the community to fully participate in the affairs of their children's education. Active and meaningful participation by the community-based stakeholders is not only encouraged but also desired by the community although it was clear that the participation is minimal and mainly confined to the provision of resources as opposed to ensuring and furthering the availability of school accountability measures. This agrees with Nampota and Munthali (2014, p.22) who contend that community participation in Malawi in school governance and management, on the whole, is highly unsustainable as they are predominantly engaged in the construction of other infrastructures and fundraising activities. To date, the situation has not changed considerably. The communities are not empowered much, due to a lack of knowledge and general disinterest in the whole matter of school accountability which is accentuated by deep-rooted poverty among members of the communities. They would rather go about their own business than get involved in school management issues.

We encourage and civic educate the community on various issues regarding school operations. Parents are encouraged to pay fees and everything is done by parents here, for instance, they contribute money for the construction of a fence to protect our learners, their property as well as school property from some unscrupulous villagers. In addition as an Association, we encourage parents to report to us if they note anything peculiar on the part of teachers, students, and the entire school management.(Participants said in turns, FGD1 held on 16/03/17]

Other participants at school B had this to say;

We as members of the PTA duly chosen by the parents themselves, simply encourage the surrounding communities to work with the school, admittedly we have a lot more to do in sensitising the communities to make them more active and register meaningful participation in matters relating to school management. We are not yet there, maybe because we are not particularly sure of what our role is since not much in terms of

training the personnel has been done on the issue [Participants Centre B, FGD 2 held on 22/03/17].

Commenting on the same issue of promotion of active and meaningful community participation, another FGD conducted at school C revealed that Community-based stakeholders such as PTA and Mother Groups go an extra mile in ensuring that the communities fully participate in the running of the school. These at times engage the chiefs to push their subjects to have an interest in what is going on in their respective schools. They also have one-on-one chats with parents and door-to-door meetings, and hold numerous meetings on open grounds where they highlight the importance of active and meaningful participation in management and decision-making processes in schools in order to achieve school accountability. These initiatives resonate well with the spirit of PET, a theoretical framework informing this study.

At school D, the members said they were empowered by the community to demand reports from the school on various management decisions. The members emphasized that the community is especially keen to know how the General Purpose Fund is used and demands a greater say on how it is spent.

Kwa zaka ziwiri tsopano anthu ozungulira sukuluyi takhala tikulangiza sukululu kuti ndalama za General Purpose Fund (GPF) zigwiritsidwe ntchito polipira ma bilu amagetsi amugonagona. Kunali bilu yoposa MK1,000,000.00 (1 million kwacha) moti mmene tikukamba pano yatsala yotsapitilira MK300, 000.00 (Three hundred thousand kwacha) basi [For the past two years, the community has constantly kept on advising the school that the General Purpose Fund be utilized to offset the payment of utility bills at the Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi (ESCOM) which was over **MK1,000,000,00** (One million kwacha). Now as we speak, the bill has been drastically reduced to just around **MK300, 000, 00** (Three hundred thousand kwacha) **(Participants D5, Centre D, FGD 4 held on 05/04/17)**.

Participants at school E echoed the same sentiments as others, that there is a deliberate effort made to ensure that the parents and all those residing in the communities around the school should take a keen interest in what is actually happening in the school if the areas are to register any worthwhile social and economic transformation. Most importantly, parents and all the people are encouraged to assist the school in whatever way possible. These parents understand the significance, value, and tangible benefits such actions bring forth to the school and in the uplifting of their children's education. Further, communities through parents are asked to help in moulding the behaviour of learners by promoting good and desirable behaviour among their children and wards at home. This will more likely translate to well-disciplined and responsible students at school.

As PTA we also do monitor teachers' accountability, school performance, and student behaviour. If the school records dismal performance in any of these aspects, the committee sits down with the school to map the desirable way forward. **(Voice of participants at school E, FGD 5 on 13/04/17).**

4.5.3 On whether the CBS set goals on school performance

When participants were asked whether the community-based stakeholders set performance goals for the school, the findings of the study were that most community-based stakeholders do not set goals for the expected performance of the school. At one school, a member had this to say (amidst clapping of hands and ululating from the other members):

Antaa!Kuti achimwene?Tisabisepo pano.Sizinachitikepo ndithu kuti tiyike mlingo woti afikire mabwana athuwa pano.

Never! We have absolutely never done that. We cannot mince words on goal setting here. Goals are not set, said one participant at school B. [FGD 2 held on 22/03/17].

It was, unfortunately, observed that PET was largely discarded in this regard in that the schools just operated in a manner that showed total disregard for the contributions of the

community. The community was not engaged in setting and attainment of goals. The respondents remarked that they accepted whatever results came their way. When it was put to them that as stakeholders they had the right to set and demand good standards; the participants expressed ignorance and hinted that they held the head and the entire staff in high esteem and believe that they are the overall masters to determine issues of standards and how to achieve them. This view was expressed by some respondents at Centre E who expressed their opinion as follows;

Timaona ngati ntchito imeneyo ndiya ahedi ndigulu lawo poti ndiwo adaphunzira bwino za zimenezo. Zoti ife kuimitsana nawo kuwauza zochita, ayidere! Sitipanga ngakhale timaona ndikumva kuti ana alephera mayeso. Palibe icho tichita, mwina tiyesa chifukwa chosadziwa mbali yathu zot itichite

We regard goal setting as solely the duty of the head and his team since they are the ones highly qualified for that and we cannot tell them what to do. May be, this is all due to the fact that we are not aware of our role
[Participant E 8, FGD held on 13/04/17]

Participants at school C also reported that they have not ever set goals for school performance. This according to the respondents was largely due to a lack of cooperation among school management, staff, and the PTA, lack of training too was also cited as the reason for failure to set performance goals as they are unable to execute their duties. They fear it is not for them to do so for fear of encroaching into other people's sphere of influence. They reckon that PTAs can fully work effectively if properly trained in their roles and responsibilities.

This finding resonates well with what Hedger et al., (2010) found in their study. They posit that having knowledge and clarity about roles, duties, and responsibilities may make access to decision-makers easier and enable the community to lobby or work with the right level attitude for the right issue. The current study revealed that there is an ever-increasing gap between the community-based stakeholders and the school management

team in terms of knowledge and roles of the community in promoting school accountability. Structurally, the society is not independently empowered to execute their duties as evidenced in the lack of orientation to CBSs about their roles. This finding agrees with Francis and James (2003), Bruns et al.,(2011), and Ogawa and Nishimura, (2015) that the lack of autonomy of each institution and severe inequality in society leads to low community participation and accountability.

Community members who are clear on the roles and duties and responsibilities will demand reduced resource leakages at all levels, no or low teacher absenteeism rate, efficient teacher deployment and resource use, and high levels of local monitoring. All these point to a successful school accountability mechanism which was identified as some of the factors contributing to or enhancing the quality of education. The finding is also consistent with Mfun-Mensa, (2004) who argued that at the school level where there are both PTAs and SMCs, the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities can actually be a recipe for disaster and friction between the groups which in one case, was reported to be a cancerous seed which spreads to the wider community and negatively impact on community enthusiasm in community participation.

Participants at school D and F differed from the other participants in other schools in that the former in the FGD at centres D and F agreed on one thing; goals are set and substantiated their claim by stating that once Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) results are received they are analysed by the school management and the PTA demands to be served with a copy, where most ordinarily it would go further to set targets in the next academic year. The committee further reported that it also delivered on achieving a reduced school dropout rate which was one of the highest in the district. This was one of the objectives set by the PTA, to have the school dropout rate reduced.

At school D, it was found that the PTA does set standards, one of which is to have a computer literate community and it works hard in that regard to secure the new computers and maintain the old ones respectively to raise standards. Members further said that they had a keen interest to know what goes on in the library and ensure that

books are well taken care of to avoid unwarranted losses. To this effect, one of the participants made the following remarks:

We also ensure the availability of books at the school. Parents contribute some money to buy essential books for use by our students in the library. No teacher is allowed to take such books home. They are of course permitted to use within the library. All this was done to ensure good performance to conform to our set standards.(Participants D, FGD 4 held on 05/04/17)

When it was probed further as to why the committee decided to take such drastic measures against teachers who are supposed to be knowledgeable in order to deliver the right contents to the learners, the participants responded that it was noted that books were not properly accounted for when teachers took them out of the library. No punitive measures were put in place in case of losses. Sometimes the teachers could take the books with them when they were on posting.

At school F, participants strongly agreed that the community-based stakeholders really do set standards. This is what they said;

Yes, we do want our children to progress with their education as such we cannot have the luxury of not setting the bar high. In order to do that we help school management to ensure availability of materials, observing teacher's punctuality especially on coming to work and knocking off, learners' class attendance, mode of dressing for both learners as well as teachers, especially females. (Participants F6, FGD 6 held on 11/05/17)

The preceding discussion provides enough folders that the community-based stakeholders look at the idea of setting standards for the school differently. To them, standards begin and end at the results so whatever measures they bring in, their focus is on improving performance. Taking into account that whatever action is carried out in the name of contributing to the quality of education, is in itself, goal setting, albeit the goals are not in written form.

4.5.4 Ensuring that school management implements set standards

When it was put to the discussants in FGD on how they ensure that the school management implements the set standards, the participants gave varied responses. The following were themes that emerged:

- a. One school hinted that no measures are taken to ensure the attainment of set standards.
- b. In contrast to this at school B, participants agreed that they provide incentives to encourage both teachers and students to work hard.
- c. At School C, participants mentioned that the community-based stakeholders actually assume the role of the superintendent in monitoring the conduct of both the teachers and the learners.
- d. In line with point c, the participants also said they at times intensify the supervision of teachers and classroom observation. A view also shared by other participants at school E.

At one school, the study established that the community-based stakeholders do not take any measures since they are not well conversant with their responsibilities coupled with a lack of trained personnel to handle such issues.

When the same question was put to another group of participants at school B, the respondents were quick to say that their main focus is on the results as such they encourage the teachers to work hard and do well. They incentivise their performance in form of money; highly performing teachers as evidenced by the grades produced by students in each subject, are rewarded with monetary incentives. In case of undesirable performance, the management and the Parent Teachers' Association, and all those concerned with the school performance call for a review meeting to establish the causes or problems for such poor performance and suggest areas or ways for improvement. Due to this, management and teachers are compelled to work hard. "When parents contribute their time, labour, materials, land and funds, they tend to be more involved in school activities, including participating in meetings with teachers and monitoring teachers,"

Rugh and Bossert (1998, p.157). Consequently, school management and teachers, in turn, feel more obliged to deliver better education for the students in order to respond to the needs of the parents and communities.

At school C, the respondents narrated that all the time, because of ensuring that school management implements the set standards, they conduct analysis of the problem, sometimes they assume the role of superintendent in monitoring the discipline of both teachers and learners; become mediators in settling disciplinary cases amicably where such issues arise. In addition students, themselves are encouraged to work hard.

For school D, the participants responded that to ensure that schools do implement set standards; they review performance termly, especially at the end, where they appreciate the strengths and failures. They also look at the general work carried out at the school in order to improve the learning environment. For instance, the PTA took up the initiative to fix classroom floors- where shoddy work was done by the contractor. The PTA has in a such situation taken up the issue of maintaining the cracking floor. To substantiate this, members made the following comments:

Nthawi zina a PTA timatenga gawo powona kuti ntchito ikuyenda bwanji. Mwachitsanzo, pomanga ma block atsopanowa ali apowo,timaona kuti ntchito ikuyenda bwanji ndipo pomwe pavuta timanena kuti pakonzedwe. Tunena pano ma kalasi ena simenti yasweka ndipo tachitenga kuti ndife oti tikonzense moswekamo

Sometimes the PTA plays a supervisory role where construction work is going on. For instance, when they were constructing these classroom blocks we could move around to monitor the work and could advise accordingly. As we speak the floor in that block(points to one of the classes)needs maintenance and we feel it is incumbent upon us to do so.[Voice of participant at school F6, FGD 6 held on 11 /05/ 17].

In another development, participants at School E hinted that they carry out supervision of teachers, and intensify classroom observation though this approach, according to them, is not popular with the teachers. They also admitted that they do have impromptu visits, observing the learners' punctuality more especially, the time they report for classes and knock off. From experience, they have also learnt to set standards as a means of quality assurance for any construction work carried out hence they also monitor the construction of buildings and purchase of building materials to make sure that they meet the required standards.

When they were asked why class observation does not seem to be popular among some teachers, the participants said teachers feel the community-based stakeholders are practically interfering in the teachers' work by overstepping their boundaries. The study also found that training on the roles and responsibilities of the community-based stakeholders is needed not only by the community member leadership but also by the head teachers and their subordinates as well.

4.5.5 In case of poor performance, what do the community-based stakeholders do?

When the researcher tried to find out from various community-based stakeholders what they do if schools perform poorly, it was found that some schools just look on and let things sort out themselves. For instance, at one school participants expressed the following;

Palibe chomwe ife timachita ngati sukulu siidachite bwino kwenikweni
chifukwa pakati pathu palibe amene ali ndi chidziwitso komanso
anaphunzitsidwa za zomwe tingachite koter etikusowa upangiri pa zomwe
tingachite ngati zinthu zitachitika nchoncho.

We do not take any measures because we do not have knowledgeable or
trained personnel and therefore lack proper information on what is
supposed to be done in such circumstances[participants' at E5, FGD 5, on
13 /04/ 17]

In contrast to the above view, over 80% of the schools visited, the participants stressed that they usually sit down with all relevant stakeholders at the school level to brainstorm on the measures which can help improve performance. It is observed from the preceding discussion that authorities adhere to the dictates of the Public Engagement Theory by accepting to engage the community-based stakeholders to bang heads on how to improve performance in schools.

Timakhala pansi ndikulimbikitsa akuluakulu apa sukulu komanso aphunzitsi onse kuti achite bwino. Timaunikira zomwe zapangitsa kusachita bwinoko. Koma pomwe achita bwino timawayamikira nkuwapatsa mphoto pofuna kulimbikitsa aphunzitsi komanso ana asukulu kuti adzigwira ntchito molimbikira kwambiri,

We sit down and encourage the management, teachers and all involved to do well. We trace and review all the factors which might have contributed to the poor performance. Impressive performance is rewarded so as to encourage the spirit of hard work in both teachers and students.

Some participants reported that analysis of the problem is the first thing done and then corrective measures are brainstormed and then given to the school management to take the required action. Parents too are given instructions on what to do to enhance learner performance at the school. Where there is a need for money, parents through the PTA, contribute and set aside a certain amount of money to help in academic work such as printing examinations so that learners do away with the archaic method of taking examinations from the chalkboard. One member had this to say:

Kawirikawiri timakumana ndi aphunzitsi akulu kukambirana nkhani zofuna kupititsa patsogolo ka nkhozedwe ka ana pa sukulu. Pali ndithu mfundo zomwe tinakhazikitsa ncholinga chopatsa aphunzitsi komanso ophunzira mtima wolimbikira pofuna kuti azichita bwino. Ochita bwino timawapatsa mphoto ndithu kuti enawo atengere chitsanzo ndipo potero sukulu yonse idzachita bwino.

We often hold regular meetings with the head teacher discussing at length several issues about how we can raise performance and instill in our learners and teachers the spirit of hard work. We have, to that effect a deliberate policy to reward outstanding performers annually. This is done to let other students and teachers emulate the good practices solely intending to improve performance.(Voice of participants at school C3. FGD 3 held on 30 /03/ 17].

4.5.6 Ensuring that the schools attain the expected educational outcomes

The question of what is it that the community-based stakeholders do to ensure that schools attain the required educational outcome received mixed responses from various groups.

The study found that the CBSs often ask the headteacher to outline the plans for achieving expected educational outcomes. It was also revealed that the CBSs encourage strict adherence and observation of the rules and regulations by both teachers and learners although some CBSs feel they do not have much to do in this regard as reported by one group;

Kupatula kufunsa aphunzits iakulu pa zomwe akuchita pa sukulu pa kuti maphunziro apite patsogolo, palibenso china chomwe timachita pofuna kuonesetsa kuti ana akuchita bwino. Timaona ngati ndife operewera mbali imeneyo ngakhale nthawi zina ana akhala akudandaula kuti sakuphunzira mokwanira,

[“Apart from asking the head teacher, there is nothing else we do to ensure high student attainment of the set objectives. Although we have had cases where learners have often complained of inadequate learning, the issues end there. We seem powerless in that regard.” [Participant D3.FGD 5, held on 05/04/18].

In contrast to the view alluded to in the verbatim quote above, some participants at another school strongly intimated that they encourage strict adherence and observation of the rules by both teachers and students. Teachers need to stick to the principles of their professional conduct at all times.

Those contravening the code of conduct are reprimanded. All this is in pursuit of attaining the expected educational outcomes. Participants at school B further said they have in place a system that enables them to easily and clearly see how several students are performing in each class. The chairperson of the PTA emphasised as follows:

We have also adopted a new format of school reports where all the students' names and scores per subject in class appear on one mark sheet. This helps parents to compare the scores of all students concerning their children or wards in each subject and can therefore offer needed guidance based on the information and stark evidence on the mark sheet. For instance, in the case where a particular learner claims he or she has failed because they were not learning that particular subject can easily be counteracted by comparing how others have performed in that subject. (Voice of the chairperson; school B.FGD 3 held on 30 /03/17).

4.5.7 Procedures put in place to encourage community participation

Answering the question as to whether the schools visited had any deliberate procedures in place to ensure maximum and meaningful community participation in school activities, one group of participants at school A reported that the head teacher was open and very encouraging in that regard although they admitted that they had not seen any written down procedure or anything of that sort communicated to them in a written form. In fact, more than half of the participants reported that there were no procedures at their school. No doubt, this lack of well-laid-out procedures on how the community can actively engage in school accountability has an adverse impact on community participation as things just happen haphazardly. This is so because the right information does not normally trickle down to the community which stifles accountability and transparency as a result it greatly discourages community involvement. A clear manifestation of what

happens when certain principles work against the theory of Public Engagement. This is in tandem with the findings by Francis & James (2003) who established that when decision-making and resources stem from a single source characterised by insufficient information sharing and transparency, community participation is discouraged.

There are no procedures in place, albeit, of late, we have seen an influx of Non-governmental organizations coming in such as Save the Children through ASPIRE, Youth Net, and Counselling (Yoneco) which encourage us to familiarise ourselves with the school management and be conversant with the procedures of community participation (participant A1, FGD 1 held on 16/03/17).

The study unveiled the fact that most schools do not make the procedures readily available to community-based stakeholders for unknown reasons. As a result of this, the CBSs reported feeling powerless as they do not have the proper basis to begin to demand accountability from the office bearers at the schools. Nishimura (2014) acknowledges that apart from, the critical thinking ability of the community members for analysing policies and their need to initiate action, the attitude of trust, mutual respect among people over school management, and the spirit of voluntary contribution; information sharing within the community and between community and school and coordination among different stakeholders within the community and the school administration is also important. Quite clearly, then, if such aspects exist, procedures can be put in place to encourage community participation.

4.5.8 Monitoring of student learning and other activities at school

Three schools out of the six (thus representing 50%) that were visited plainly indicated that they monitor the teaching and student learning through various means. For instance, FGD at one school revealed monitoring of student learning is done through the Mother Group which asks learners mostly girls, to comment on the whole learning and teaching process at the school. On the other hand, the PTA usually asks the head teacher about the whole learning process at the school. Though this was the case, members were quick to point out that there is a need to offer civic education not only to the community-based

stakeholders but also to parents as well as teachers in order for all stakeholders to appreciate the need for monitoring students' learning. Similar sentiments were also echoed at another school (Centre B) where the members interviewed indicated that they mainly considered it appropriate to monitor the learning process through the head teacher and the deputy head teacher whom they normally asked to provide information. This was slightly different from what participants at a third school responded where they mentioned that they do monitor learning activities in class in order to promote quality education.

Abambo! Ife timalowa mu kalasi ndikuona kuti maphunziro akuyenda bwanji, kaya aphunzitsi akuphunzitsa bwanji ndipo akukhala bwanji ndi ana. Timaonanso kasungidwe ka nthawi pakati pa ophunzira komanso aphunzitsi pofuna kuona kuti nthawiyi akuigwiritsa ntchito bwanji, nanga ku sukulu akubwera nthawi zANJI dipo akuweluka nthawi zANJI.

We do monitor learning activities in class, particularly how teachers deliver the content and interact with their students, observe punctuality, that is; the time both the students and teachers come in and leave the school campus. (Participants at Centre B, FGD 2 held on 22/03/17).

However, the other schools visited openly said that they do not monitor the learning and teaching process. This was largely due to the fact that they are not conversant with the system of operations though the head teachers encourage them to do that. Participants at one of the schools had this to say;

Ngakhale tsiku limodzi lomwe sitinapitemo mu makalasi kukaona momwe maphunziro akuyendera chifukwa cha chikhulupiliro ndi ulemu omwe tilinawo pa aphunzitsi athu. Timakhulupilira kuti akugwira ntchito yotamandika komanso sitimapita mkalasimo chifukwa sitinayambe taganizapo kuti nkofunikira kwa ife kutero makamakanso pounikira kuti tilibe ukadaulo weniweni womwe tingagwiritsen tchito poyendera mu makalasimo.

No single day have the members of PTA ever gone in a class to monitor learning and teaching process; sometimes this is done out of trust and respect for the teachers. We feel and trust that teachers are doing a good job and besides we never thought of it as being incumbent upon us to monitor the process. More significantly, we do not have the technical aspects of the monitoring of teaching and learning process. (Participant D 3, FGD 4 on 05/04/17).

The finding corroborates with what Shoraku(2008) and Nguon(2011) found that most parents think that teaching and learning are the business of schools and teachers and should not, therefore, be interfered with.

4.6 Significance of CBS in ensuring School Accountability

All participants in the study seemed to agree that Community-based stakeholders such as PTA and SMC are very significant in ensuring school accountability. In all the schools visited, the participants echoed the views that school management becomes very responsible and accountable in their actions and dealings respectively. Some gave examples that since the PTA became vibrant at their institution they have witnessed an improvement in how school property is stored. This could be deemed as a direct positive attribute of the Public Engagement concept. Previously, school property went missing without a trace. This is contrary to what is happening now. A member had this to say:

PTA helps to ensure that school property is properly accounted for, for instance as we speak we received a sewing machine six years ago from well-wishers, and that machine is still intact and available; a thing which was not the case previously. A lot of school property went missing probably some members of staff helped themselves to it. In addition, the way bursaries are being handled currently is more accountable and transparent mainly due to the influence of the other stakeholders' involvement in its management. (Participant F 4, FGD 6 on 11/05/17)

The FGDs revealed that CBSs help to bridge teachers, parents, and members of the community, and this was viewed as a good step towards bringing transparency and accountability which in turn enhances efficient and prudent use of resources as envisaged by the theory of Public Engagement, a theoretical framework binding this study. Another point that was highlighted by the participants was that CBSs such as PTA and SMC play a helpful role in enhancing the satisfaction of learners' needs. For instance, under the guidance and through the positive contributions from parents, the general sanitation has improved in schools and this encourages both sexes (males and females) to learn. Besides that, participants felt that PTA plays an arbitrating role among various stakeholders thereby cutting out a life of cooperation.

4.7 Satisfaction with CBS's performance

The question as to whether the PTA and other community-based stakeholders are satisfied with their performance towards promoting school accountability received mixed responses, with slightly over 66% of the schools visited expressing dissatisfaction with CBS's performance. Four schools out of six visited reported that there was very minimal satisfaction with the way they perform their duties due to a number of factors they highlighted.

These include lack of knowledge of their roles and responsibilities; inconsistency and discrepancies in enrollment against funds collection which is solely the duty of the school management; lack of consultation on monetary issues especially in the collection and making decisions on the needed expenditures. This finding corresponds with what (Fata & Kreng, 2015) found that school directors never reported the available budget and expenditures to the staff and community. The participants were quick to point out that this lack of consultation and information blackout on monetary issues was most often a bone of contention in various schools. As noted in the theoretical framework (PET) employed in the study, where community participation shrinks, transparency and accountability take down heavy knocks. Members of the community lack trust in the institutions governing them.

Nevertheless, some schools hinted that they were much satisfied with the PTA's performance. For instance, participants hailed the spirit of the community members in being able to raise funds and carry out other development activities at the school level, although in certain areas development stagnates, a problem which they attributed to financial constraints. The finding agrees with Fata & Kreng (2015) who established that some community-based stakeholders typically perform well in raising funds to build infrastructure and maintain classrooms or buildings.

4.8 Factors enhancing community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability

On the question of what are some of the factors that best promote community-based stakeholders' participation in school management affairs, the study found out, just like in the spirit of Public Engagement Theory, that cooperation among the head teachers, teachers, and members of the CBSs is very critical in bringing about the needed active and meaningful participation from the community-based stakeholders, such as the Parent Teachers Association and Mother Groups. In addition to this, participants also mentioned that there is a need to exercise fairness, transparency, and accountability in all the transactions the school is involved in, in order to bring the trust of the members.

Kunena zoon, mugwirizano wabwino pakati pa aphunzitsi aakulu (ahedi) komanso aphunzitsi ndi PTA ndiwofunika kuti tigwire ntchito bwinobwino kuti pasakhalenso kukayikirana pa zinthu zosiyanasiyana maka pa kayendetsedwe ka ndalama. Ngati pali kukaikirana kapena kubisirana kulikonse pa za ndondomeko yomwe yasatidwa pa kagwiritsidwe ntchito ka ndalama zinthu zimasokonekera kwambiri.

Frankly speaking, cooperation among the head-teacher, teachers, and the members of the community including the PTA is very vital in promoting participation. Financial prudence, transparency, and accountability on how the money is used help to clear mistrust which in the long run promotes community participation [Voice of participants at school B, FGD 2 held on 22/03/17]

When there is consultation between the school management team and the PTA on issues to do with money transactions, it builds trust among the members and generates confidence in the capabilities of those managing school affairs. Once trust is instilled, members of the PTA easily attend to their work unlike in situations where there is distrust. Financial prudence was also another factor that helped to pave way for the smooth participation of the CBS in school management affairs.

4.9 Factors hindering PTA's smooth participation in school management affairs

The participants from various schools visited unanimously mentioned lack of training as the main problem that hampers the community-based stakeholders from active and meaningful participation in the affairs of the schools. As it is, they claimed that they do not work as they were supposed to because they were not trained, therefore are not aware of their roles and responsibilities. Their area of jurisdiction is somehow limited by this lack of knowledge. This finding agrees with what Nishimura (2017) found and alluded to that another challenge was associated with the SSC's lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They do not have sufficient knowledge about what their roles and responsibilities would encompass in executing their duties. In some centres, it was notable that such a knowledge gap was broadened due to a lack of training from school managers as well as community-based stakeholders' leadership.

Secondly, a lack of transparency and accountability on the part of the school authorities also hinders community participation. Often the PTA is not consulted especially on the funds either collected from the community or from the central government for schools that receive government subvention. Ideally, in line with PET, the theoretical framework, the community-based stakeholders ought to be involved in the collection, receipt, and utilisation of funds at the school level in order to enhance school accountability. The exclusion of the CBSs is a recipe for disaster. This breeds mistrust and subsequently suspicions reign supreme. Just as Fata & Kreng (2015) point out, transparency would allow the community to be actively involved in school work such as school expenditures, income, teaching and learning processes, and others. In this sort of social, economic, and somehow academic intercourse, both the school and the community would gain a lot

from each other as schools would gain trust from the community, and communication would improve between the schools and communities (Fata &Kreng, 2015, p.41)

4.10 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented the findings and discussions of the study based on the questions that guided the generation of the research data. The study basically has unearthed a number of issues key among them were that the community-based stakeholders have a very positive view of the role of the PTA, SMC, and Mother Groups. The communities admitted that these stakeholders have a great potential to improve school accountability and the quality of education in the country. Another important finding highlighted in the chapter is that in almost all the schools visited, the members of community-based stakeholders are not trained. Consequently, they fail to competently execute their duties as well as engage in the management of the school. However, it was found that CBSs mainly get involved in activities to do with infrastructural development which range from the construction of hostels, classroom blocks, toilets, and fences other than being actively engaged in decision-making processes that deal with fiscal planning, budgeting, and actual spending of the funds generated from the community or given by the central government.

It was also found that most community-based stakeholders do not actually set goals or standards for the school as they feel that only the administrators are highly qualified and therefore the right people to set standards. Several factors attribute to this. Firstly, the members of the community lack the capacity to do so as the school administrators, education officials, and NGOs have not been aggressive enough in this regard. Further to this, the study also revealed the factors that enhance community-based stakeholders' participation in school management which among others include cooperation, transparency, and accountability. On the other hand, there are also factors that the study found as being impediments to community-based stakeholders' participation in school management. These impediments include a lack of proper training and orientation of the CBSs, and a lack of transparency and accountability.

The next chapter dwells much on the conclusions drawn from the findings and discussion of the study. It further goes ahead to present the implications of such conclusions and the overall application of the study to contemporary situations in schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, conclusions are drawn on the findings of an examination of the role of community-based stakeholders in the promotion of school accountability. This was a prime study within Balaka District educational context. It explored to a greater depth the level to which the community-based stakeholders such as Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs) and Mother Groups (MGs) participate in school management. The study also explored the challenges they face in their bid to enhance school accountability that most often than not would be ignored in policy and practice. Finally, implications of the study's findings and areas for further research have been outlined.

5.2 Conclusions

This study draws conclusions based on the findings in the following key areas including the role of the community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability and community-based stakeholders' engagement in school management issues. It also draws conclusions on the factors that assist to enhance community-based stakeholders' participation in fostering school accountability and highlights those elements that are a hindrance to the active and meaningful engagement of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability.

5.2.1 The role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability

Numerous findings have been revealed regarding the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability. It was found that the community-based stakeholders have a critical oversight role in mobilisation of resources. In most of the schools visited, the study revealed that there was a heightened level of participation in helping schools to raise funds for infrastructural development and maintenance which

had been the trend from way back in the 1970s. However, community participation in more contentious management issues generally remained minimal, especially in the area of financial accountability. Lack of capacity building and training in the issues of community participation, and financial and school accountability were cited as the main reasons for the community-based stakeholders not being actively engaged in management issues. The implication of this is that members of the community feel sidelined on matters of finances and could be a potential cause of conflict bordering on mistrust between the community-based stakeholders and the school management on how the management uses the funds.

This finding supported that of (Fata & Kreng, 2015) who found that there was a substantial level of SSC involvement in school management and its subsequent performance in Cambodia. The current study also found out that 98% of the participants in all the schools visited had not undergone any formalised training to help them in how they could perform their duties. This was also commonly cited as one big challenge the community-based stakeholders face in implementing their roles. This challenge stems from a lack of proper training which impacts heavily on the CBS in their endeavour to perform the required duties of their office.

5.2.2 Perceptions of Community-Based Stakeholders on the role of community participation in promoting School Accountability

It was established through the study that community-based stakeholders positively view the role of such groups as being very vital and relevant to the development of education in their communities. The community-based stakeholders if properly trained and empowered can potentially enhance school accountability and efficient use and storage of resources in the schools which often would translate into improved school performance.

It was also revealed that the positive esteem in which the community-based stakeholders perceive community participation in promoting school accountability needed some formal reinforcement so that the spirit should continue among the CBSs. Further, it was clear that community-based stakeholders could correctly engage with school management

most actively and meaningfully participate in the education of their children and wards if they were properly trained.

However, the current study found out that almost all the participants in all the schools visited had not undergone any formalised training to help them in how they could perform their duties. This was commonly cited as one big challenge the community-based stakeholders face in implementing their role. The CBS perceived the lack of training as a great impediment to enhancing their oversight role for it impacts heavily on the CBS in their endeavour to perform the required duties of their office. This implies that much of the work carried out by the CBSs is done from an uninformed basis and therefore restricts their potential. Hence, the community-based stakeholders must be properly trained to give out the best in helping schools promote accountability. The head teachers can take up the initiative to train the members of the CBSs as provided for in the policy framework, NSCPPSM, 2014)

5.2.3The community-based stakeholders' involvement in school management and decision-making processes that promote school accountability

The study found that more than half (66%) of the participants were involved in the management issues. These reported that they were part and parcel of making some decisions on crucial issues such as decisions on disciplinary cases involving both students and teachers. However, 17% of the participants reported that management's consultation with community stakeholders was largely superficial. Most of them said they were only consulted when a project requiring parents to dig deeper into their pockets was looming. Once the funds had been generated, they were sidelined and never consulted. The school management in such situations did not even bother to explain how much had been generated let alone how the funds had been used. This has an implication on how the community-based stakeholders regard the school management. Often, they think that school management is self-serving and exploits the community to enrich themselves. The implication here is that a proper flow of information is needed as to how the funds generated from the community members are used. This potentially could avert misplaced anger and distrust towards management.

The last group, which made up 17% of the participants, incredulously reported that they were never consulted at all, they were simply told of the decisions management came up with. This principle is in sharp contrast to and works against the spirit of Public Engagement theory which forms the bedrock of this study. People should be consulted as early as the time of hatching the plan through to its implementation.

5.2.4 Factors enhancing community-based stakeholders' participation in school accountability

On this point, the finding of the study was that cooperation among head teachers, teachers, members of community-based stakeholders, and all other community members was very key to improving and promoting active and meaningful participation of the community-based stakeholders such as the Parent teachers' Association, and Mother Groups. Further to this, the study also found that the cultivation of good relationships and trust was very critical in promoting CBSs participation. It was clearly evidenced in the study that the absence of either of the two suffocates many operations of the school, mainly those that depend on the goodwill of the community members. These two aspects, therefore, need to be heavily safeguarded. The implication of this is that the school management needs to exercise fairness, transparency, and accountability in all the transactions if they are to win back the trust of the people. In turn, the people will build absolute confidence in the capabilities of the management at the helm of running the affairs of the school thereby fostering sustainable community participation.

5.2.5 Factors hindering community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability

The findings were that lack of training and capacity building mainly hampered the community-based stakeholders from active and meaningful participation in the affairs to do with the promotion of school accountability. The CBSs said they do not work as they were supposed to because they were not trained. Hence, they are not aware of their roles and responsibilities. Their area of jurisdiction is somehow limited by this lack of proper knowledge and skills.

Secondly, a lack of transparency on the part of school authorities also hinders community participation. Often the CBSs such as PTA are not consulted especially on the funds collected either from the community as well as from the central government in case of schools that receive government subvention. This was seen as a recipe for mistrust and consequently suspicions reign supreme in such school communities.

5.3 Areas for further research

The current study focused on the subject of role of the community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability. There is, however, a room that further studies can be done on the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting teacher accountability. This is so because the teacher is viewed as one who has the most direct impact on learners' success in the classroom and as such teachers need to hold their responsibilities to the highest standards of performance. The community-based stakeholders can in this regard help shape the teachers in the right direction.

In addition, further studies can be conducted on how the school policy influences teacher accountability. This is important as it can help in creating a conducive environment for accountability to thrive. This will in turn entail that teachers will be highly committed, answerable, and responsible for their actions. Both of these studies can also be carried out at other levels of education.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This study set out to examine the role of the community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability. It was guided by the following main question; what should be the role of community-based stakeholders in promoting school accountability? This study found that there was a heightened level of community participation in some sectors such as infrastructural development. However, community-based stakeholders' participation shrank in the area of financial accountability largely because of a lack of increased community capacity to learn and develop knowledge and skills in the specified area. This point is buttressed in that community-based stakeholders are not trained in school accountability programmes thereby greatly impeding their work. The study also found

that the community-based stakeholders positively perceive their role in community participation in the promotion of school accountability; however, there is a need to put in place deliberate measures to formally empower them to execute their roles in an informed manner.

Further to this, the study established that about 66% of the community-based stakeholders were involved in the management and decision-making processes that promote school accountability, however, it was also found that most of these community-based stakeholders do not set goals for school performance. 17% of the CBSs thought that the involvement is superficial as they were only told what the school had already planned.

The study further established that cooperation, transparency, and building of good relationships and trust among various stakeholders were crucial in enhancing community-based stakeholders' participation in promoting school accountability. Whereas lack of these coupled with lack of training mainly affected the CBS's smooth operations and active participation in school management affairs.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Letter of Introduction from Chancellor College

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Principal: Richard Tambulasi,
B.A. (Pub Admin), BPA (Hon), MPA, Ph.D

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

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

9th November 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

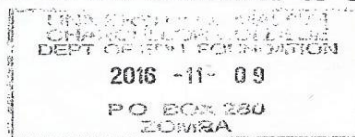
INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP)

Mr. Anderson Manda is a student of Education in the Department of Educational Foundations at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

Mr. Manda is working on his thesis, "***Examining the Role Community-based Stakeholders in Promoting School Accountability***". This is meant to be a request to your institution or organization to assist our student in his endeavor to collect data.

Thank you

Symon Ernest Chiziwa, PhD
HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOUNDATIONS



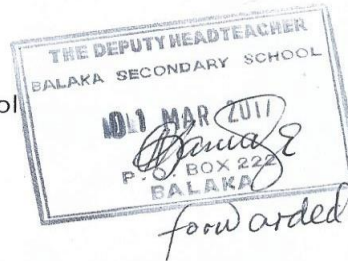
APPENDIX 2: Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct a Research

Balaka Secondary School
Post Office Box 22
Balaka

01 March 2017.

The Education Division Manager
South East Education Division
Private Bag 48
Zomba.

Through:
The Head teacher
Balaka Secondary School
Post Office Box 222
Balaka.



Dear Sir

REQUEST TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BALAKA DISTRICT

I write to ask for your permission to carry out academic research in the month of March 2017 in some conventional as well as community day secondary schools in Balaka District which falls within South East Education Division.

I am a teacher at Balaka Secondary School and a Master of Education student (**Policy Planning and Leadership**) in the Department of Educational Foundations at Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi.

Currently I am working on a thesis; **"Examining the Role of Community-Based Stakeholders in Enhancing School Accountability"**

Looking forward to your affirmative response on the basis of this information.

Yours faithfully,


Anderson Manda

APPENDIX 3: Letter of Introduction from Education Division Manager

REF. NO. SEED/ADM/VOL. II/478

06th March, 2016.

FROM : THE EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER, SOUTH EAST EDUCATION DIVISION,
PRIVATE BAG 48, ZOMBA.

TO : THE HEADTEACHERS,
BALAKA SECONDARY SCHOOL
CHEMBERA COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL
ULONGWE COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL
PHALULA COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL
TOLEZA COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL

**AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS ON THE EFFECT OF EXAMINING THE ROLE
COMMUNITY BASED STAKE HOLDERS IN PROMOTING SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABILITY – THE CASE
OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SEED.**

I write to kindly request your office to allow Mr. Anderson Manda, currently a post graduate at Chancellor College – the University of Malawi to carry out a research for his thesis in examining the role of community with your Students and some of your teachers at your institutions.

I will be most grateful if Mr. Manda is given all the necessary support and guidance so that his research is carried out successfully.

I look forward to your usual support and hoping at the same time that you will accord this request all the attention and urgency that it deserves.

M.S.D. ALUFANDIKA

EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER



APPENDIX 4: An Interview Guide for CBS (PTA) Members

AN INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PTA/SMC MEMBERS

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ON THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY BASED STAKEHOLDERS IN PROMOTING SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

BIO DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

- a. Gender**
- b. Age range**
- c. Educational qualification**

1. How did you become a member of School Management Committee or Parent Teachers Association?
2. How long have you been a member of School Management Committee or Parent Teachers' Association?
3. What is your position in School Management Committee or Parent Teachers' Association?
4. Have you ever attended professional trainings in School Based Management?
5. What is your perception of the role of PTA/SMC participation in school affairs?
6. Does the school actively involve the SMC/ PTA in its management and decision making process?
7. What sort of management and decision making processes do you as SMC and PTA mainly get involved in?
8. How do you promote active and meaningful community participation in the school management system?
9. Do you set goals on the performance or standards for the school? Give examples
10. How do you ensure that the school management implements the set standards or goals? Give specific examples.

11. What do you do when the school performs below standards or set goals?
12. How do you ensure that the school attains the educational outcomes as expected by the government or local community?
13. How does the school ensure that the SMC/PTA are involved in its school management system?
14. Do you monitor student learning and all other activities happening at the school? Give specific examples.
15. Of what significance is the SMC/ PTA in ensuring school accountability?
16. How satisfied are you with the level of SMC/PTA in management and decision making process?
17. What prompted you to become members of SMC/ PTA?
18. What factors best promote the work of SMC/PTA?
19. What are some of the factors that hinder SMC/PTA's smooth participation in school Management affairs?