

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY DAY
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MALAWI

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the text of this thesis entitled **THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MALAWI** is substantially my own work

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SIGNATURE

APRIL 2009

DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to my late mother, Mrs Esnart Anold Chepuka for her effort in encouraging me to go to school during my childhood days.

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This study developed out of my experience as a secondary school teacher and through my interaction with various stakeholders in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi. It has been made possible through insights and advice from different people, mostly from the Faculty of Education at Chancellor College in the University of Malawi.

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ABSTRACT

This study follows concerns raised by various stakeholders indicating that despite the emphasis of community participation in Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs), the students' access to education in these schools as well as the quality and relevancy of education taking place in these schools remain unsatisfactory. The study focused on identifying the role local communities were playing in the management of these schools and why their impact seems unimpressive. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, an exploration was made into the experiences of the main stakeholders in ten purposely-selected CDSSs in Blantyre, Chikwawa and Zomba districts. In-Depth Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Questionnaires and Observations were the main methods used to collect data.

Literature reveals that community schools are mostly initiated by local communities, sometimes with the assistance of Government or Non Governmental Organizations in order to improve access to education for people in disadvantaged areas. A high level of community participation in the day-to-day management of the school is the hallmark of a community school. Generally, the schools pride themselves in that their curriculum takes into account the needs of the community and their students have relatively high achievement mostly attributed to the high level of community involvement in the schools.

The study found that the stakeholders do not know the proper definition of CDSSs, particularly how they differ from Conventional Secondary Schools. Furthermore, although a long period has gone since the schools were converted from DEC's; the communities have not yet been sensitized about their role in the schools. The community's participation in these schools is largely in resource mobilization and not in real decision-making process of the schools. This poor degree of community participation is believed to have contributed to the poor access, quality, and relevancy of education in these schools. There is however a potential for proper community participation where communities are involved in real decision-making in the affairs of the school and take ownership of the outcome of those decisions. This form of participation leads to increased access to education, quality and relevancy of the education and student achievement. This thesis recognizes the fact that the effectiveness of any policy depends on the context in which the policy is being implemented. This study therefore suggests that, some policies should be formulated to address the unfair inequalities existing between CDSSs and CSSs.

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A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
CSS	Conventional Secondary School
CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
DE	Distance Education
DEC	Distance Education Center
DfID	Department for International Development
EDO	Educational Division Office
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGI	Focus Group Interview
GoM	Government of Malawi
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDA	International Development Association
IIEP	International Institute for Education Planning
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
MASPA	Malawi Schools Parents Association
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MCDE	Malawi College of Distance Education
MCDEC	Malawi College of Distance Education Center
MSCE	Malawi Schools Certificate of Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoESC	Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PIF	Policy and Investment Framework
PSS	Private Secondary School
PSLC	Primary School Leaving Certificate
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SEED	South East Educational Division
SEP	Secondary Education Project
SWED	South West Educational Division
USA	United States of America
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
ZCSS	Zambia Community Secondary Schools

CHAPTER ONE

Back Ground And Rationale

1.1 Introduction

Formal secondary education in Malawi is provided mainly through Conventional Secondary Schools (CSSs), Private Secondary Schools (PSSs) and Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs). CSSs and CDSSs are referred to as public secondary schools because the government largely funds them. According to Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST,1999), there are four types of CSSs in Malawi namely National Secondary Schools, Government District Secondary Schools, Government Day Secondary Schools and Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs).

National Secondary Schools are full boarding secondary schools, which are relatively well resourced and established. Students from various districts who are academically bright are selected into these schools. Government District Secondary Schools are schools with boarding facilities where academically bright students from a particular district who were not selected into the national secondary schools, are selected. Unlike in national schools, students who are unable to pay boarding fees are allowed to operate as day scholars. Government Day Secondary Schools are secondary schools established by government in various areas of the districts to cater for students within an area. All students in government day secondary schools operate as day scholars as there are no boarding facilities and selection of students into these schools is done after the national

and the district boarding secondary schools are filled. Grant-Aided Secondary Schools are those established by churches and are partly run by them. Each of these schools however receives funding in form of grants from the government covering about 90% of the total budget. The government also deploys and pays most of the teaching staff in these schools. However, in addition to students who enroll in these schools through government selection, churches also admit their students who are selected through their own examinations.

The origin of CDSSs in Malawi dates back to 1998. These schools were previously called Malawi College of Distance Education Centers (MCDECs). According to Leymaman (1998), these centers were set up by local communities. The main activities at these centers included supervision of the students, counseling and time to listen to radio programs in groups. Leymaman however admits that, parents without understanding the philosophy of Distance Education (DE) demanded that their children receive direct instruction, as were students in Conventional Schools. By 1998 students in all Distance Education Centers (DECs) were actually receiving direct instruction from teachers just like in CSSs (Gwede, 2005).

During the DEC era, the local communities used to participate in school development projects and governance mainly through school committees. In fact, members of the local communities established most of the DECs (Chakwera, 2005). Among other things school committees, in conjunction with teachers-in-charge (as head teachers in these schools used to be called in those days) were responsible for selection and enrolment of

students, disciplinary issues mainly involving students and construction or maintenance of school infrastructure. The quality of education was however not satisfactory as the schools were mainly characterized by very high student to teacher ratios, inadequate and poor school infrastructures (such as classrooms, dormitories, toilets etc.), inadequate instructional materials and unqualified or under qualified teachers (Leymaman, 1998).

In 1998, the government decided to convert all DEC's into Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs) in order to ensure that the youth of Malawi are provided with a more equitable and improved quality secondary education (MoEST, 1999). One point that was emphasized in this policy was that local communities through school committees would be playing a major role in the affairs of the schools. Furthermore, the government would also provide finances and other material resources to supplement what the community was providing at the school. Selection of students into these schools was to be done on merit by the Ministry of Education through Division and District Offices unlike in the past when the schools were allowed to enroll students themselves; and only students from the school's surrounding communities were to be considered for selection into the schools (MoEST, 1999).

It can however be noted that the conversion of DEC's into CDSSs removed some of the responsibilities of local communities in the running of these schools; for example, selection and enrolment of students were now done by officials at the Educational Division Office (EDO). Furthermore, all boarding facilities which were managed by local communities at the schools were phased out. This development could have acted as a

disincentive to the local people around these schools as it could affect their sense of ownership of the schools. This study was set out to investigate the role local communities were playing in the management of CDSSs

1.2 Statement of the problem

The main reason for establishing CDSSs in Malawi was to improve on equity and access to a better quality secondary education for the youth of Malawi (MoEST, 1999b). This was particularly important in light of poor performance of DEC students at national examinations, especially at Malawi Schools Certificate of Education (MSCE) examinations. The conversion of DECs into CDSSs was also linked with the introduction of other policies. One example is the policy which states that community participation should be promoted at both primary and secondary school levels (PIF, 2001). According to a comprehensive review of community primary schools in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) by Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002), academic performance of community schools is supposed to be higher compared to public schools. Furthermore, Rose (2003a) observes that other things being equal; the high local community participation in school management is one of the main reasons why students in community schools have higher achievement than those in public schools. Likewise, Shaeffer (1994) observes that government and the local community collaboration partnership can lead to more effective and relevant education, greater equity of such education, greater demand for and acceptability of education, and more resources for education.

Despite the conversion of DECs into CDSSs with emphasis on community participation in the management of the schools, the results of national examinations in Malawi have

shown that academic performance of CDSSs is still poorer than that of the other secondary schools (Chakwera, 2005; Gwede, 2005). This is an indication that the policy change is not working as expected and this study was instituted to investigate where the problem was, particularly in relation to community participation.

Furthermore, the student enrolment in most CDSSs is very low despite the presence in the community of a lot of qualified young people who are in need of secondary education (Chakwera, 2005). According to Chakwera, many students who are selected into these schools end up transferring to other schools such as CSSs and Private Secondary Schools (PSSs) while others simply drop out of school. Girls are particularly more affected than boys and most of them end up even not reporting for studies after being selected into the schools or they drop out of school completely after attending their studies for few days (Chakwera, 2005; Macjessie-Mbewe 2004b). Indeed, education statistics indicate that the student dropout rate in CDSSs is higher compared to other types of secondary schools (EMIS, 2005). Since most students in CDSSs commute from their homes, one wonders then what role parents and guardians are playing in the education of their wards.

Macjessie-Mbewe (2004a), observed that some members of the local community are not satisfied with the curriculum being offered in their schools because it is not adequately addressing their needs, particularly practical skills which the students can use in their every day life. This may be one of the reasons why more students seek transfers to go to CSSs and private schools. However, as important stakeholders in these schools, members of the local community through SMCs or PTAs are expected to have a say about the number and nature of subjects being offered in their schools. Moreover, as members of

the local community, they also have the responsibility of ensuring that adequate resources are available for normal functioning of their schools. Williams (1986) as quoted by Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) observes that community participation is a valuable resource for education. According to MoEST (1999) the ultimate aim of converting DEC's into CDSSs was to make these schools be at par with CSSs. However, the poor infrastructures and inadequate teaching and learning resources in these schools means that the schools are still far away from being at par with the CSSs (Chakwera, 2005; Gwede, 2005; Macjessie-Mbewe, 2004b). This study was set out to investigate the role members of the local communities were playing in the management of these schools.

1.3 Aim of the study

The main objective of this study was to investigate the role members of local communities were playing in the management of CDSSs. This investigation was basically carried out in order to find out the nature of community participation taking place in these schools, the impact it was making on secondary education, in terms of its quality and accessibility to the deserved youth of Malawi, and the relevance of its curriculum to the stakeholders.

1.4 Research questions

The following were the four specific questions that the study was attempting to answer:

1. What do members of the local communities understand to be the meaning of a Community School?

2. Were local communities sensitized about their role(s) in the management of CDSSs?
3. How are local communities participating in the running of CDSSs?
4. What impact is community participation making in the CDSSs?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study is significant, not only to the Ministry of Education authorities but also to all stakeholders in the education system. Firstly, the Policy and Investment Framework of the Ministry of Education clearly indicates that the successful implementation of various education policies will require closer co-operation between the Ministry of Education and the full range of educational stakeholders such as: parents, local communities, employers, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and religious organizations; all of whom will be called upon to assume significantly larger roles in education finance and governance. (PIF, 2001). The local community's success in assuming larger roles will obviously depend on the level of their management competency. It should therefore be necessary that their current level of participation and competency in management of schools be known in order to determine what needs to be done to prepare them to assume larger roles. This study will help in some way to assess the level of participation and competency of the local communities in the management of schools.

Secondly, the PIF also states that the Ministry of Education shall promote the decentralization of secondary school management by devolving substantial management functions to individual schools by the year 2002. This was mainly aimed at giving

secondary schools greater autonomy and accountability in the utilization of school finances as a way of increasing school effectiveness and academic achievement. At the time this study was conducted, this policy had just been implemented in some few CDSSs. The findings of this study may therefore help educational authorities to know how best to roll out this policy considering the state of SMCs and PTA committees available in these schools.

Thirdly, by understanding the situation in the schools one is able to assess whether community participation, which nowadays is highly advocated for, is having any impact in the schools. An understanding of the views of the main stakeholders in these schools can help both policy makers and implementers to identify issues for further training and clarification and possibly define appropriate roles for various stakeholders in the education system, including members of the local communities, in order to improve education delivery in schools.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis has been organized into five chapters. The first chapter comprises of the introduction to the study, statement of the problem, aim of the study and its research questions. The second chapter is the literature review section and it comprises of the review of related literature on community participation and community schools. The third chapter is the research methodology where issues of study design and how the data were collected and analyzed are discussed. The fourth chapter consists of a presentation of

findings and their discussion. Chapter five is the last chapter and it comprises of the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical base

The conversion of DEC's into CDSSs in 1999 was one of the landmark policies that have been implemented in the education sector in Malawi. The basis for this policy was the fact that DEC's were operating as secondary schools but working with limited facilities which also were often of very poor quality. The schools were renamed community secondary schools in order to signify the critical role local communities were to play in the management of these schools so as to improve their quality.

According to Hadad (1995), a policy can be defined as an explicit or implicit single decision or group of decisions which may set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or retard action, or guide implementation of previous decisions. Reimers and McGinn (1997) however, define education policy as the goals for the education system and the actions that should be taken to achieve them. While acknowledging that the policy making process is generally a continuous cyclic process starting with the identification of policy problem all the way to evaluation and the beginning of the new policy cycle, Evans et. al. (1995) identified six stages involved in a complete policy cycle. The success of a given policy in achieving its aim(s) is therefore largely dependent on how well the policy has been managed at each of these stages.

The first stage is that of identifying the policy problem. This is where analysis of the existing situation is done and policy agenda set after considering a number of issues such as country background, social economic and political contexts (Hadad, 1995). The second stage is that of formulating and assessing policy options. At this stage alternative solutions are drawn up and evaluated in order to find the best, technically sound, economically feasible and politically practical option which is then picked as the policy option (Dye, 2002). The third stage is where the particular policy option which has been chosen is adopted for implementation. The fourth stage is that of implementation of the adopted policy. At this stage the policy options are translated into specific strategies for carrying out the policy. Since policies interact with local realities and are adjusted accordingly, this is an on going part of policy formation process (Evans et al 1995). The fifth stage is the evaluation of the policy impact. At this stage, baseline data collected prior to policy implementation is compared with the information which is being collected in order to provide an appropriate indicator of the policy impact (Hadad, 1995). After evaluation, the last stage which also marks the beginning of a new policy cycle begins. At this stage the policy option is adjusted to take into account the results of the evaluation.

Reimers and McGinn (1995) argue that although the formulation of policies and plans can be done by isolated individuals, the intended results are always social or collective.

It should be noted here that for a policy to be effective in achieving its objectives all stakeholders affected by the policy must adequately participate at each of the stages outlined above. Obviously in order to participate reasonably the stakeholders must have knowledge. However, as Reimers and McGinn (1995:31) observed, “In most situations

the persons who generate knowledge are not the same persons who formulate policies, who are not the same persons who carry out the policies.” Communication and consultation amongst stakeholders in the policy formulation process is very important. It is therefore obvious that for the local communities to offer meaningful support to development activities adequate communication must exist between the communities and the authorities. Furthermore the information must also flow from both parties in order to give an opportunity for feedback. This study attempted to find out the nature of interaction existing between policy-makers in the Ministry of Education and members of the local communities and how this interaction is affecting community participation in the CDSSs.

2.2 Definition of a community

The term ‘community’ is very complex as it has different meanings (Shaeffer, 1994; Rose, 2003). This means that the term community school may also mean different things to different people. In order for the people in the local area to render meaningful participation in the management of a community school, they need to have a common and clear understanding as to what the term ‘community’ really means. It should be remembered that these schools were initially called Distant Education Centers and there must be a reason why the term CDSS was deemed more fitting for these schools. It should therefore be important to find out whether the stakeholders in the CDSSs; such as parents, teachers, and students have the same and correct understanding about these schools.

Hornby (1974) defines community as the people living in one place, district or country considered as a whole. Similarly, Kuper and Kuper (1996) concur and say that the term community refers to a group of people who are sharing a defined physical space or geographical area such as a neighborhood, city, and village. From these two sources one can therefore conclude that a community is a collection of people living in the same area and by extension a community school may therefore mean a school, which enrolls students from the same area. However, in Malawi, it is a common knowledge that all public primary schools enroll pupils from their surrounding areas, yet they are never called community schools. Furthermore, particularly in urban areas, it is common for some students to attend schools, which are not closest to their residential locations. Indeed, Rose (2002) admits that the group of people, which may be termed a local community in Malawi schools, is generally not homogenous. Chimombo and Kadzamira (2001) also observed that communities are not cohesive and homogenous groups, but are instead characterized by vast differences in power along gender, economic, ethnic or religious lines. This study was also undertaken to find out what community is in these schools.

2.3 Definition of a Community School

According to Bisika (1994), a school is defined as a place where not less than ten pupils or students receive regular secular instruction either by personal tuition or by correspondence. From this definition, it is clear therefore that DEC's were genuine secondary schools even before they were converted into CDSSs. If the place of residence of the students enrolled in the school were to be the only determining feature for a school to be referred to as 'community school' then as already pointed out earlier, most primary

schools in Malawi would qualify as community schools. Community's collective ownership of the school and a high level of community participation in the day-to-day management of the school appear to be important defining features of a community school (Bray, 2000; Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder, 2002; Rose, 2003a).

Indeed, Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002:3) observed that "Community-based school management is the common element in community schools." However, one may wish to find out what the main stakeholders in the CDSSs, mainly parents, teachers and students understand as the meaning of Community Schools. The people's understanding of the definition of CDSSs is important as it may have a bearing on their roles and aspirations in these schools. The quality of school management and indeed the quality of education taking place in the schools can be determined by the level of the people's understanding of what the schools are. This study therefore attempted to understand what the members of the local community know as the definition of CDSSs so as to establish whether their knowledge has a bearing in the nature of community participation taking place in these schools. Since the Community School phenomenon is not limited to Malawi, there is a need to find out how these schools are defined in other countries.

According to Tietjen (1999:1) in Mali "a community school is where communities have significant responsibilities in creating, constructing, financing and managing the school, recruiting and paying teachers and procuring school materials." Indeed "Community schools differ from government schools in their funding sources, governance, management structure, organization and often curricular" (Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder,

2002:3). In Malawi, most CDSSs were indeed established by local communities. However, some CDSSs were actually established by government through donors such as the International Development Association (IDA). Furthermore, the government is responsible for recruitment and payment of teachers' salaries and monitoring of educational standards (MoEST, 1999). Therefore, unlike in Mali, local communities at CDSSs in Malawi do not participate in some crucial issues of school management such as recruitment of teachers and payment of teachers' salaries.

In Zambia, a community school is a community-based, owned and managed institution and a committee of community representatives manages and organizes these schools. However the schools can be locally or externally initiated and they target orphans, underprivileged children and girls (Zambia Community School Secretariat (ZCSS), n.d.) as quoted by Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002). The CDSSs in Malawi do not target specific populations, at least as far as the official position on these schools is concerned.

The target population is also important in the definition of community schools that are established by the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE). Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) reports that CARE's Community Schools World-wide provide educational opportunities for under served groups such as the rural poor, ethnic minorities and girls at a sustainable cost. The schools are therefore located within the communities that have no easy access to public schools and management of the schools involves a partnership among private organizations, communities and government. Teachers are recruited, trained and supported from the local area. The curriculum and

pedagogy in use in the schools is child-centered. From this description it seems clear that these community schools cannot be classified as public schools as the government does not fund them. In Malawi, the CDSSs are fully public schools and the government takes greater control of whatever is happening in them although a certain amount of collaboration with the local community is advocated for (PIF, 2001).

Hartwell and Pittman (1999) observed that community schools often provide education where families have no alternative. From this observation, it can be suggested that DEC's were in a better position to be referred to as Community Secondary Schools as they used to serve students who had no alternative choice for pursuing secondary education. During the DEC era, especially before the dawn of multiparty democracy in Malawi, there were very few Private Secondary Schools and those available were also very expensive. There was therefore no alternative for most students in Malawi to pursue formal secondary education hence the DEC's provided the main alternative avenue for secondary education. The advent of multiparty democracy in Malawi in 1994 saw the mushrooming of many private institutions including secondary schools. Some of the Private Secondary Schools charge fees, which are almost the same as those charged by some public secondary schools. It is not surprising therefore that Chakwera (2005) observed that some students freely leave CDSSs and enroll themselves in Private Secondary Schools.

Students now have to be selected to the CDSSs on merit. However some of the students selected into these schools have the means to either go to private schools or conventional secondary schools. It is not surprising therefore that some students who are selected into

CDSSs end up transferring to the other schools thereby creating vacancies in the CDSSs (Chakwera, 2005). The problem becomes worse when one considers the fact that despite the existence of qualified youth in the community who are desperately looking for places in secondary schools, the local authorities at the CDSS are unable to enroll them because the responsibility to admit students at the CDSS is only with the Educational Division Office. One wonders then whether these schools are better fit to be referred to as community schools now than when they were DEC.

Welmond (2000) as reported by Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) indicates that in Mali, the World Education Community Schools are defined as a cost-sharing arrangement with government where the community usually builds schools and hire teachers and the Ministry of Education provides supervision. In this case, generally the school belongs to the community but is included in the national education system. In Malawi the community initiates most CDSSs. The community members themselves often carry out construction of the school infrastructure and also provide finances for the purchase of some learning resources at the school. Some CDSSs were however initiated and constructed by government or NGOs (Leymaman, 1998; Save the Children, n.d.; Chakwera, 2005).

From the discussion above, it sounds clear that the definition of CDSS in Malawi is effectively different from that of community schools in other countries although there may be some similarities in some respects. The definition of CDSSs in Malawi becomes even more complicated as the government without adequately defining these schools

indicated that its ultimate wish was to make the CDSSs to be at par with the CSSs (MoEST, 1999). One may wish to know how these schools could really be at par while the CDSSs maintain their community status.

From literature in this study, it has been found that a community school is largely defined by a high level of community participation not only in the establishment of the school and its resource mobilization but also in its day-to-day management. This study is therefore of the view that the appropriate definition for a CDSS can be any Day Secondary School established in an area where qualified and interested students from the surrounding community are enrolled and a high level of participation in the day-to-day management of the school by members of the local community is available. As already pointed out, community participation in management of the school is the main defining feature of a community school (Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder, 2002). Indeed, a high level of community participation and involvement in the day-to-day management of the school should be assumed to be the major defining feature of a CDSS in Malawi. It is therefore necessary to understand the definition of community participation and how it is operating in these schools.

2.4 Community Participation

A disagreement exists amongst scholars on the use of the terms 'Community Participation' and 'Community Involvement' in sustainable development issues. Some scholars argue for primacy of Community Participation ahead of involvement while others prefer primacy of Community Involvement ahead of participation (Shaeffer, 1994). Beare (n.d.) as quoted in Moyle and Pongtuluran (1992), argues that community

participation means that the community has the right to be part of the action while community involvement implies that the community is drawn into the action hence participation should be preferred over involvement. The World Health Organization (WHO) (1981), however, gives community involvement preference over community participation and argues that it is not sufficient to merely participate which may be a passive response, but there should be mechanisms and processes to enable people to become actively involved and take responsibilities for some decisions and activities. While acknowledging the existence of this disagreement amongst scholars on the appropriateness of the two terms, this study views that the two terms may be used interchangeably.

Scholars admit that participation is a complex term (Bray, 2000; Rose, 2003a and Shaeffer, 1994). Actually, Bray (2000) argues that community participation in education ranges from what he calls ‘pseudo’ participation to ‘genuine’ participation. In concurring with Bray (2000), Rose (2003a) observes that community schools involve the community in construction and management of the schools, however the extent to which the community is involved can vary considerably. At one end there is ‘Pseudo’ participation (the lowest level of participation) which is defined as a consultative process where citizens are merely kept informed of the developments at the school level and are expected to accept decisions that have already been made. At the other end there is ‘Genuine’ participation (the highest level of participation) which implies a voluntary and spontaneous process where the community is able to take part in real decision-making and governance and all members have equal power to determine the outcome of decisions

and share in joint activities (Schaeffer, 1994; Bray, 2000; Rose, 2003a). The scholars observe that there are several different degrees or definitions of participation from the so-called ‘pseudo’ participation to ‘genuine’ participation. According to UNICEF (1986) as quoted by Shaeffer (1994) the pseudo-genuine continuum can be defined or illustrated by the following seven degrees of participation:

1. Involvement through the mere use of a service (such as enrolling in a school).
2. Involvement through contribution (or extraction) of resources, materials and labor.
3. Involvement through attendance e.g. at parents meeting at school.
4. Involvement through consultation on a particular issue.
5. Participation in the delivery of service often as a partner with other actors.
6. Participation as implementers of delegated powers and
7. Participation in real decision-making at every stage i.e. identification of problems, the study of feasibility, planning, implementation and evaluation.

As indicated in this continuum, the last degree is the most genuine form of participation and is desirable as it ensures common ownership of the school and of decisions made at the school. In fact, Ogun (1982) as quoted by Shaeffer (1994) contends that a more participatory approach to development begins with the assumption that sustainable development ultimately depends on enhancing people’s capacities as individuals and groups to improve their own lives and to take greater control over their own destinies.

According to Shaeffer (1994), greater participation can make the following three achievements: Firstly it can lead to changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills and distribution of power across individuals and communities. Secondly, through greater participation in a particular sector of development (such as education, health and agriculture), greater demand for the service of that sector can be achieved. Lastly, greater participation can lead to services being more relevant to community needs and more sustainable over time. As already explained earlier, the situation in most CDSSs in Malawi is not satisfactory and this raises suspicion that possibly something is not right with the kind of community participation taking place in these schools. While admitting that community participation alone may not be the panacea for improved learning in schools, it is nevertheless important to investigate the role community participation is playing in the running of these schools. The study therefore attempted to find out the type (or the degree) of community participation prevailing in these schools so as to identify what needs to be done to improve it for the benefit of the schools and the community as a whole.

Greater (or genuine) community participation would ensure proper accountability by the stakeholders, which may improve learning taking place in these schools (GoM, 2002b). Rose (2003) however argues that for local communities to genuinely participate in management of schools, they need to be trained and be empowered. While acknowledging that greater community participation in the management of CDSSs is necessary and that training and empowerment of key stakeholders is needed, it is necessary that the current level of community participation be investigated so as to know

what needs to be done to improve the situation. This study attempted to find some of the skills that are already available in the community, which if properly utilized may help in enhancing genuine community participation.

Although the CDSS Policy did not precisely indicate that the key actors in the management of CDSSs would undergo formal training, it indicated that at least guidelines for the role of School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs) would be given to the schools (MoEST, 1999). Over seven years had passed and this study attempted to find out whether these guidelines were really available in the schools and if indeed they were there, what impact they were making on community participation in these schools. It should be mentioned here that in community participation the local communities are not the only actors. Teachers, especially head teachers play a crucial role in facilitating community participation at the school. The study also attempted to find out whether teachers particularly head teachers were trained to deal with issues of community participation in these schools.

2.5 Models of Community Participation in Schools

According to Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002), models of community participation in education can be classified into three namely: traditional community-based education, government-sponsored education and the collaborative model. Generally, the local community displays a varied degree of involvement and participation depending on the model in use. In community based education model, members of the local community initiate, establish and manage the schools with little government assistance. Usually the

curriculum used is such that the learners are encouraged to actively apply concepts and information, skills or attitudes to local situations (Calliou, 1994). In the government-sponsored model, members of the local communities play a periphery role as the government meets most of the educational needs for the learners. In collaboration model, which is also the commonest and probably most desired, there is a partnership between the government and the local communities. Both the government and the community play significant roles in meeting the needs of the students in the schools. Williams (n.d.) as quoted by Uemura (1999) contends that the collaborative model of community participation (in which the community supports government provision of education) has been largely triggered by government's lack of resources and mismanagement, making it unable to deliver adequate educational services to the community.

Community participation in the CDSSs in Malawi appears to belong to the collaborative model since although members of the local communities are asked to take a greater role in the management of these schools, the government still plays a major role in recruitment and payment of teachers, selection and admission of students and provision of some resources (MoEST, 1999). Parents and members of the local community on the other hand provide financial and other resources in the form of school fees, project contributions as well as some management issues in the school. The important issue however may be to decide whether this model is the best in promoting genuine community participation in the CDSSs in Malawi. According to MoEST (1999) and MoESC (2001) the local communities are urged to play a greater role in ensuring that an acceptably good quality education takes place in the schools. However, what needs to be

critically considered is the proportion of the burden which can be shouldered by the local community. This is especially important, as most of the communities benefiting from the CDSSs are poor so that to expect them to contribute more resources may just be the same as promoting the poor quality of education prevailing in these schools. This may also perpetuate the serious inequalities that exist between CSSs and the CDSSs (Gwede 2005, Chakwera 2005). Furthermore, although a large population of financially and intellectually capable people may exist around the school, there may be a tendency for members to leave the responsibility of participation in the school only to parents and guardians of students who are currently enrolled at the school alone. This is particularly true because due to the poor quality of education in the CDSS, parents who are financially able to make significant contributions at the school end up transferring their wards to better schools (Chakwera, 2005). The school is thus deprived of adequate resources for its development and prosperity.

Rose (2003) identifies four models of community participation evident in Sub-Saharan Africa namely: Spontaneous Community schools, International agency-supported community schools, community participation in government schools and community participation in cross-sectoral program. In spontaneous community schools the grassroots communities initiate, construct and support the schools. In Kenya for example, the Harambe Schools from which the secondary education largely evolved were spontaneous community schools (Rugh and Bossert, 1998). In Malawi the CDSSs may not entirely fit into this category as the government has been involved in the affairs of these secondary schools in one way or the other from the time these schools were called DEC. In fact,

according to Leymaman (1998), the very idea of establishing DEC's was largely initiated by the government in order to allow more students to access secondary education.

In international agency-supported schools, according to Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002), the donor funds the establishment of the community school through NGOs and community involvement in this case can comprise of a broad range of participation. Once established, the schools are handed over to the government and in most cases management of the school becomes like in any other conventional secondary school. Very few CDSSs in Malawi were established in this way.

In government schools, community participation has continuously been promoted and formalized through both international and national policies (Rose, 2003). In this model, community participation is usually being used as the alternative source of resources for education (Shaeffer, 1994; (Bray, 1996; Bray and Lillis, 1998; and Watt, 2001) as quoted by Rose (2003a)). With this motive, one wonders whether the government can take genuine community participation, which includes enabling local communities to take part in real decision-making and governance and to have equal power in determining the outcome of their decisions as its top priority. The government indeed constructed a number of CDSSs in Malawi with funding from IDA. Most of these schools however, have in fact been upgraded to conventional secondary schools, especially those which had sufficient infrastructures (Gwede, 2005). This therefore raises a question as to whether CDSSs are supposed to be only those secondary schools with poor and insufficient infrastructures. Considering the fact that communities are supposed to take

greater ownership of the CDSSs in their area, the changing of these better equipped schools into CSSs may affect community participation as students from the area who would have been selected into the better school end up getting selected into the undesired schools.

The cross-sectoral programs embrace some elements from the three models outlined above. In this model the community participation includes the involvement of the community in identification of priority areas as well as in carrying out the projects. For example, in Malawi the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) projects seem to embrace this model as they involve the communities in identifying the priority areas as well as in carrying out the projects themselves (Rose, 2003). The local communities are supposed to initiate the project by finding the school site, providing bricks and sand before MASAF can commit its funds for the project.

2.6 Church-owned CDSSs

There are also some CDSSs in Malawi that were established by Churches and are mostly located at their premises. The government supports these CDSSs, just like it does with Grant-Aided CSSs. Although these CDSSs accommodate students from other denominations, the Church to which the school belongs also plays a significant role in its management. Nevertheless, ordinary members from the local community are also allowed to participate in its management (Gwede, 2005). Like all other CDSSs in Malawi, the government supports them through payment of teacher salaries and other expenses although the amount of support given to them is far less than what it gives to the CSSs

(Leymaman, 1998). This study attempted to find out what impact the church ownership of the school has on community participation in the school.

2.7 Community participation and access to secondary education

William (1986) as quoted by Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) observed that in most countries the issue of lack of access to education is linked to lack of resources hence governments seek financial contributions from communities to compliment their own investment in the provision of education. From this observation it can be argued that one of the methods that governments use to increase access to education is by promoting the opening of community schools. Indeed, Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) concur and argue that community schools increase access to schooling particularly for children from the neglected populations such as rural areas, ethnic minorities, girls etc. It is clear that in Malawi, CDSSs just like DECAs were established in order to increase access to secondary education for qualified students; however one wonders whether appropriate mechanisms were put in place to ensure that those selected into these schools were indeed from the marginalized communities. As Chakwera (2005) found out, the number of students that were enrolled into these schools is much less than the number that used to enroll in DECAs. Furthermore, he also observed that some of the students who are enrolled in these schools end up dropping out or transferring to other schools. The question one may wish to ask here is; why are these CDSSs not addressing adequately the issue of access as they were meant to? Could it be that there is something wrong with the way communities themselves are participating in the management of these schools? This study was undertaken to shed more light on this.

Rose (2003a) found that at primary school level in Malawi, community participation was mainly used as a way of mobilizing the resources needed for education in the schools. It is however doubtful whether this type of participation can really increase access since the communities may feel being exploited. The problem becomes worse when only parents and guardians of students who are currently enrolled in the schools are subjected to this resource mobilization. It is very likely that some members in the community may actually avoid sending their children to school.

Hartwell and Pittman (1999) observed that CARE generally created community schools to increase access to education for children who would otherwise have no access. In Malawi the CSSs apart from being fewer in number than CDSSs (EMIS, 2005), most of them are located in urban areas (Gwede, 2005). The rural areas are therefore disadvantaged in as far as access to good schools is concerned. Furthermore, according to Gwede (2005) most of these CSSs do not have boarding facilities. It therefore means that even if more students from rural areas were to be selected to these schools they would still find it difficult either to find accommodation closer to the school or to travel to and from the school. Since most primary schools in Malawi are also found in rural areas where most of the secondary schools are CDSSs (EMIS, 2005), it therefore means that CDSSs are institutions where the majority of the youth in Malawi can hope to pursue their secondary school education. However, the fact that most of these schools have very low enrolment due to among other reasons, the poor quality of education (Chakwera, 2005) suggests that the schools are not adequately addressing the issue of access to secondary education as they were meant to. According to Uemura (1999), community

participation in education is a good strategy to improve education access and quality. From the CDSS policy (MoEST, 1999) and MoESC (2001) it can be assumed that Community Participation exists in these schools. However, the presence of problems such as low access, high dropout rates, poor examination results, and generally poor infrastructures in these schools (Chakwera, 2005) calls for an investigation as to what role community participation is playing in these schools.

2.8 Community participation and relevance of the school curriculum

One of the important issues that need to be considered when deciding the school curriculum is its relevancy to the society in which the school is serving. Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) observed that community schools offer education, which is more relevant to the wants and needs of the community. In six case studies carried out by Rugh and Bossert (1998), it was observed that most community school models attempted to make programs more attractive to children by relating learning to daily life, drawing on local experience, drawing on local examples and skill resources, using interactive and student-centered teaching methods and developing opportunities for parents to become involved in the school. In Malawi, the use of locally available resources and participatory methods in teaching are now widely being promoted in all secondary schools as a way of increasing student learning and reducing the cost of education (SEP, 2000a). However, the involvement of the local communities in the actual dissemination of information or preparation of teaching aids is rare. It is also worth noting that the excessive use of locally available resources in the CDSSs may be viewed by some members of the local communities as a way of perpetuating the inequality that exist between CDSSs and CSSs.

However, Macjessie-Mbewe (2004a) observed that some rural artisans were willing to offer themselves to teach students, their skills, which the students can use even after school. In Malawi the curriculum is centrally controlled so that individual schools have very little freedom to teach what they want (SEP, 2000b). It is possibly in the area of extra-curriculum that the local communities could easily introduce programs that can be handled by skilled people from the local community. Of course, given the opportunity local artisans may prepare and/or demonstrate some teaching and learning aids for students even in the core curriculum lessons. The main problem however may be the fact that the curriculum in Malawi is examination oriented hence emphasis on passing national examinations is usually given priority by both teachers and students. Furthermore, looking at the CDSS policy it is clear that in terms of curriculum these schools are treated similarly to CSSs. However, according to Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder, (2002) curriculum is one of the important distinguishing features of a community school. The absence of opportunities for local communities to decide or let alone influence the type of curriculum offered at their local schools may pose as an obstacle to community participation as some people may be reluctant to offer support for something they are not happy about. It was therefore important to assess whether this was the case in CDSSs.

2.9 Community participation and its contribution to cost-effectiveness of education

According to Uemura (1999), education stakeholders generally want to use the limited resources effectively and efficiently to solve problems and provide quality education for children. Tietjen (1999) observed that community schools have three main advantages

over conventional schools. Firstly, they have potential for expanding access to more children and neglected populations. Secondly, they are more responsive to local demand for education (because they normally decide their structure, language, who teachers are, curriculum etc., plus they give better learning outcomes) and lastly, they are cost-effective with comparable or better instructional services for less money. The government decision to establish CDSSs in Malawi was probably based on these perceived advantages. Now that several years have passed, it is important to assess whether these schools have indeed acquired these characteristics.

According to Atkinson (1983), cost-effectiveness studies begin by defining objectives to be achieved. Then various ways are considered which could be used to achieve these objectives. The cost of these alternative ways are then calculated and related to the outcome. The least cost alternative way that meets the objective is thus the most cost-effective. From this definition one wonders whether the conversion of DEC into CDSSs was indeed a cost-effective way to increase access to quality secondary education for the youth of Malawi. This doubt comes in the wake of reports that many students leave the schools (either by dropping out or transferring to other schools) thereby making the enrolment in the schools lower than their recommended capacities (Chakwera, 2005) and that the students in these schools still perform poorly during national examinations compared to their counterparts in CSSs (Gwede, 2005). Despite some negatives, DEC were probably more cost-effective considering the fact that the schools had high enrolments and to a greater extent students had the chance of getting enrolled at a DEC of their choice. Atkinson (1983) argues that it is possible for a program to be efficient but

not cost-effective if the outputs that are actually produced do not contribute to the program objectives. Furthermore a program may be effective but neither efficient nor cost-effective if it achieves its goals but wastes resources in doing so.

According to Save the Children/USA (2001) as quoted by Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002), each community has the human and financial resources necessary to begin educating its children and the cost of education can considerably be reduced without reducing quality. This suggests that the establishment of a community school could be one of the ways of offering education to the citizens of the country cost-effectively. However, this should be viewed from the perspectives of both the government and the community. While the government may find CDSSs as a cheaper way of offering secondary education the communities may find it more expensive as the poor pass rates of CDSSs students at national examinations means that parents have to finance their children's education for a longer period of time as they repeat their studies in order to progress to a higher level.

The cost-effectiveness of the CDSSs in Malawi is therefore doubtful and questionable considering a lot of negative issues existing in these schools that impinge on the quality of education. For example, as already pointed out, the schools are well known for poor infrastructure, very low enrolments, poor pass rates, and high dropout rates (Chakwera, 2005; Macjessie-Mbewe, 2004). It is easy therefore to conclude that these schools are not cost-effective. However, the fact that participation is a very important factor in the cost-effectiveness of the school (Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder, 2002), it is worth finding out

how this factor is contributing to the current situation in these schools. Perhaps proper community participation is all that is needed to make these schools competitive to CSSs.

2.10 Community participation and student achievement

It is common knowledge that students attend schools to learn and succeed, not only in exams but also life in general. Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) observed that community schools offer an opportunity to improve quality and increase student achievement. Rowney (n.d.) as quoted by Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002), observed that the World Learning's Community School Program in Ethiopia operated under the theory that if the communities can be mobilized around their local schools and if the school committees can be made to compete for and obtain funding for school development then educational quality would improve and more children will succeed in school. Bond (1973) argues that in all strata of the society there will be real improvement in academic attainment of boys and girls where parents take an active part in the education of their children. Indeed, research in the United States of America has shown that parental and community involvement in education has a positive effect on student outcomes (Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder, 2002).

Dowd (2001) observed that community support plays a role in increasing educational outcomes in three ways: firstly, by adding resources to educational efforts; secondly, by extending education coverage or demand for quality education and lastly, by enhancing implementation, relevance and accountability of the education system. Of course, as Rugh and Bossert (1998) argued, community participation though important may not

avail much but technical expertise may be more important than local support. Likewise Shaeffer (1994) observes that participation and collaboration cannot solve all problems. It is obvious that the quality of the community participating in the management of schools is important. A poor, less educated and non-empowered community may not be effective in enhancing education quality and student achievement. Probably due to poor quality of the schools most of the students pursuing their studies in these CDSSs come from poor families as rich families transfer their wards to better schools (Chakwera, 2005). This can leave the poor communities, probably most of whom have little or no education background, to mobilize resources and manage the schools. This study, in a way, also attempted to establish the relationship between the socio-economic status of members of the local community and the quality of their participation in the management of their school.

2.11 Community participation in monitoring of teacher performance

Monitoring of teachers and students' performances is very important in order to improve the quality of education in the schools and enhance students' learning and academic achievement. In fact both the Education Act (1962) and MoESC (2001) give the local community the responsibility of monitoring activities at the school including teacher performance. However, studies that were conducted in some primary schools in Malawi found that most school committees did not monitor teacher performance because their members felt inferior to teachers due to their education qualification compared to the teachers (Chimombo and Kadzamira (2001) and Rose (2003)). At secondary school level, particularly in CDSSs, issues of school performance monitoring by the local community

should be important as the community ownership of the school is emphasized. Most secondary schools including CDSSs in Malawi are located in urban and other developed areas where there are many people with appropriate qualifications who can be elected into school committees in order to ensure that properly qualified and competent people are available to carry out this monitoring task. If indeed the fact that school committees fail to monitor teachers because of being less educated than the teachers is true, then there is a need to investigate why competent people in the community are not elected into the committees. Probably, one of the important issues to be covered in the guidelines for school committees is the qualification of the committee members themselves. However, the studies that have been carried out so far in CDSSs indicate that these guidelines are not available in the CDSSs despite the promise to do so in 1999 (MoEST, 1999; Gwede, 2005; Trigu, 2005). In most communities in Malawi, both practicing and retired professionals (such as teachers, accountants etc.) are likely to be available who, if made use of, can help to solve the committee competency problem. Furthermore, CDSSs are fewer in number than primary schools and are mostly located in urban areas and other developed areas such as trading centers, where more educated people are found unlike in typical rural areas (EMIS, 2005). It is therefore important to investigate the situation of performance monitoring at CDSSs and find solutions to enhance community participation in this area as well.

2.12 Community participation and sustainable development

Community participation in the Post-Washington Consensus era is considered important as an end in itself (as a democratic right), as well as a means to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty alleviation (Stiglitz, 1997). Rugh and Bossert

(1998) argue that community participation in education is a good idea in itself, beyond achieving education services and outcomes as it contributes to the growth of the civil society and democratic institutions which are integral parts of sustainable development. However, Dowd (2001) argue that models of community participation are distinct. In community support model the focus is on community-school relationship the substance of which are the interaction between community members and school and the ultimate outcome is pupil learning. In community participation models the focus is community groups (including the locus of power, management skills and the dynamics of decision-making). Governance is therefore the ultimate outcome of community participation. It is clear from PIF (2001) that the community participation which was envisaged to exist in Malawi schools was the one that goes beyond mere support. The community was expected to assume real governance responsibilities in the schools. The issue however is whether the community is empowered appropriately to carry out the governance responsibilities in the schools. In this case training of the members of the community, at least the key actors such as members of SMCs and PTA committees is of paramount importance. According to Chimombo and Kadzamira (2001) most members of school committees are never trained for their roles. One therefore wonders how such a calibre of people can improve school governance that can lead to sustainable development.

Welmond (2000) and Devine (2001) as quoted by Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002), observed that the World Education contributed to the overall development in West Africa through the establishment of democratic local organizations that are empowered to represent the interest of parents in the field of education. It should be interesting to find

out whether the conversion of DEC's into CDSSs has had any impact on the way these schools are governed. It is easy to note that CDSSs pose a great opportunity for development of competent and democratically sound local associations and committees as by definition, community schools are supposed to display school ownership by the local community. The other schools and indeed the other sectors of the government such as Health, Agriculture and other sectors dealing with the welfare of citizens should be able to learn from the participants in the management of these CDSSs in order to achieve overall sustainable development in the country. Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002:7) observed that "School personnel accountability to parents is also a community school contribution to education". Accountability is indeed very important in democracy. This study also in a way attempted to find out how accountable is the school personnel in CDSSs to parents or the community and vice versa.

2.13 Community Participation and School Effectiveness

Mwanza (1989) argues that children are sent to school so that they should become academically successful and that they develop into responsible adults whichever school they attend. Rutter (1979) observed that schools differ with respect to the catchment areas they serve and different catchment areas can also differ on many factors for example aspirations of the people, their attitudes, priorities and social as well as economic pressures. It is conceivable that the community influence could be related to school effectiveness (Mwanza, 1989).

The school composition in terms of such factors as the composition of students with specific behaviors or attitudes towards schooling is likely to reflect the sort of the

community the children come from. Repeated investigations for example show that delinquency rates tend to vary according to different areas and are particularly acute in urban areas with low social economic status (Rutter et. al, 1979). In Malawi the CDSSs are located irrespective of the social status of the people living around it and selection into these schools is also open to any student who has sat for Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations (PSLCE) in the area and passed. Assuming that the people living in urban areas have generally higher socio-economic status than those living in rural areas, it should be interesting to find out whether the social and economic status of the people around the CDSS affects the way they participate in school governance and how this leads to school effectiveness.

It is understandable that parents and the community at large can influence the nature of the schooling process by setting a tone or mood regarding interest in and support for schools (Madaus, 1980). Schools where parents are involved for example with classroom teaching and the library and where parents discuss their children's work and give other forms of assistance are more effective than schools which do not involve parents in school life (Mortimore, 1988). While parents' involvement in classroom and library work is desirable the idea appears to be strange in Malawi. The studies about community participation which were conducted at primary school level revealed that parents in Malawi are generally not involved in classroom teaching, let alone monitoring of teacher performance and other critical issues (Chimombo and Kadzamira, 2001; Rose, 2003a; GoM, 2002b). The education taking place in CDSSs indeed needs some attention as the poor pass rates during national examinations continue to prevail in these schools. It

should be necessary therefore, to get the views and recommendations of teachers and parents in these schools, particularly on how community participation should be handled in order to make these schools more effective.

2.14 Contribution of SMCs and PTAs to Community Participation

According to Educational Act (1962), every school is supposed to have a School Management Committee (SMC) comprising of community members. The SMC's function is to meet regularly to address school issues such as infrastructures, teacher performance, teacher discipline, quality of teaching, absenteeism etc. as they affect the day-to-day running of the school (GoM, 2002b). In addition to the SMC, some educational administrators also advocate for the establishment of Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) committee at the school whose main function is to take the SMC to account. It should be noted that PTA is not yet stipulated in the Education Act (Chapter 30 of the Laws of Malawi)

Campbell, Corbally and Nystrand (1983) as quoted by Bisika (1994) define PTA as an association in which parents and teachers are bound together seeking to promote the education of children at the school the PTA serves. According to Bisika the functions of PTA are five-fold as follows: firstly, is to ensure that schools are rooted in the community. Secondly, to ensure that programs of the school are relevant to the goals of the community. Thirdly, is to ensure that the disparity evident when a child moves from home to the school is minimized. Fourthly, to open a bridge of communication between the school and the community and lastly, to ensure that teachers participate in the community. It is also worth noting that other scholars argue that the function of the PTA

is generally to mobilize the community and to hold the SMC to account (GoM, 2002b). SMC and PTA committees are therefore very central to issues of community participation at the school level.

Although the SMCs and PTAs have existed in Malawi for many years, Chimombo and Kadzamira (2001) found that in most cases at primary school level they only exist on paper and that there is poor community–teacher relationship in most schools. It should be interesting to find out whether the absence of active SMCs and PTAs in schools is caused by the poor community-teacher relationship or vice versa. Whichever is the case, it is plausible to suggest that such problems may be resolved by putting in place strategies that would ensure an effective community participation in the management of the schools. According to Rose (2002), lack of genuine community participation in the management of schools impacts negatively on the outcome of the schools. The necessity of genuine community participation becomes more apparent at a community school where community ownership of the school is the main cornerstone of the school. One key reason for the absence of proper community participation in primary schools was identified as lack of training for school management committees and staff (GoM, 2002b).

In 2000 however, the ministry of education initiated a World Bank funded Secondary Education Project (SEP) where head-teachers and heads of departments from various secondary schools including CDSSs were trained in school-based management. Those trained were thereafter required to train their fellow members of staff at the school (MoEST, 2000). As expected, through the initiative of head teachers, community

members of school committees would be briefed about what these managers had learnt at the training workshop. Indeed, the trained members of staff are supposed to create a good environment for community participation in schools (Rose, 2003a). Over six years have now passed since this project was inaugurated and many head teachers and heads of department at secondary school have been trained, one may wish to find out as to what extent this program has benefited CDSSs in Malawi particularly in the area of improving community-school relationship and community participation in the management of the schools.

2.15 Education Decentralization

Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) argue that one of the rationales for having community schools is to implement educational decentralization. Since the Education For All (EFA) conference that took place at Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and later reconfirmed in 2000 at Dakar, Senegal, governments and international agencies have been advocating decentralization as a mechanism for improving education provision (especially at primary level) in developing countries (GoM, 2002a). In Malawi the concept of CDSSs may also be viewed similarly, as a way of decentralizing the provision of public secondary education as local communities are given greater responsibilities in managing these schools.

In Malawi, issues of decentralization started taking central stage in 1998 when the Malawi Decentralization Policy was adopted. Since then, a number of changes have taken place in the various sectors of the government. For example, in the education sector, the three regional offices that were known as North, Central and the South, which had been

in existence since independence in 1964, were split into six divisional offices namely; the North, Central-East, Central-West, South-East, South-West and Shire Highlands Educational Divisions. Preparation and payment of teacher and other staff salaries in the divisions are now done at the respective Education Division Offices (Sineta, 2002).

Naidoo and Kong (2003) observed that education decentralization in Africa ranges from limited deconcentration of functions from the central offices of the education ministry to its regional offices, to communities financing and managing their own schools. At the moment the form of decentralization of education clearly prevailing in Malawi seems to be that of limited deconcentration to Division Offices. Although local communities are involved in raising financial and material resources for education particularly in primary schools, they are generally not involved in the decision-making process about important issues at their schools (Rose, 2002).

2.15.1 Definition of Decentralization

Different people have defined decentralization as a concept differently. Bimber (1993) as quoted by Sineta (2002) defines decentralization as a shift of authority for making of decisions downward, from the center or top levels of hierarchy toward the local or bottom level. In this definition, it is clear that decentralization refers to a top down shift in the location of the hierarchical position of decision-makers. It is however not clear as to whether the decision-makers are accountable for the decisions that are made. McGinn and Welsh (1999:17) argues that decentralization is “about shifts in location of those who govern, about transfers of authority from those in one location or level vis-à-vis

educational organizations to those in another level”. In this definition the location of authority is expressed in terms of the governing body. In Malawi, four possible locations of authority in the ministry of education can be considered in this monograph: The ministry headquarters, the educational divisional offices, the educational district offices; and the schools. It is in the local schools that members of the local communities can have the opportunity to exercise some form of authority in the management of the schools. One of the purposes of this study was to find out how much authority is being exercised by local communities in the governance of CDSSs.

CDSSs were previously under Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) headquarters, but since 1999, they are now under their respective Education Division Offices (EDOs). It is doubtful whether the transfer of authority over these schools from MCDE headquarters to Education Division Offices could still be considered as decentralization. Although salaries for teachers in these schools is being paid by the government just as was the case during the DEC era, all fees paid by the student at a DEC were used at the local school, except examination fees and the money paid to MCDE headquarters for registration and purchase of instructional materials (Leymaman, 1998). At the moment all students in CDSSs pay tuition fees to the government just like other students in CSSs (MoEST, 1999). As already pointed out, community participation in these schools is not an entirely new phenomenon. It has existed in these schools even before they were converted into CDSSs. Most people in Malawi however seem to agree that decentralization can promote community participation as it enables members who are

lower in the beaurocracy to participate in real decision-making process of the institution (Sineta, 2002).

Bauman (1996) defines decentralization in managerial terms as meaning a wider distribution of power and authority in and among organizations. In this definition one would observe the idea of 'distribution' rather than shift. This implies an increase in the number of decision-makers. However the position of the decision-makers themselves in this system is not addressed. It seems clear from this definition that the emphasis is on the number of people involved in the decision-making. It is possible for decisions to be made by an increased number of people at the central office without necessarily involving people at the grass root level.

Indeed by its nature decentralization is a fluid and diffuse concept that when translated into practice also brings about many different shapes and patterns of school governance (SACMEQ, 2004). This study concurs with Naidoo and Kong (2003) who contend that a basic concept common to most definitions of decentralization, which implies to education decentralization as well, is that it is a transfer of some form of authority from the center to the local level. However it should be recognized that while some forms of decentralization can help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of educational services others may not. The establishment and recognition of CDSSs where local communities take greater participation in their day-to-day management was indeed a form of decentralization in the management of secondary education. The question

however is whether the role the local community is playing (if any) in these schools is helping to improve the provision of secondary education in the country.

2.15.2 Forms of Decentralization

Decentralization is often defined in terms of four degrees of transfer of authority namely deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatization (Rondinelli et. al, 1984) as quoted by McGinn and Welsh (1999) and SACMEQ (2004). Each of these types of decentralization has different implication for delivery of public services such as education. It is therefore important that the nature of decentralization being implemented be known in order for the stakeholders to take their appropriate roles.

Deconcentration is when the central government shifts its own staff to sub-national levels to carry out their regular functions closer to the people they serve (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). SACMEQ (2004) argues that while this may achieve greater access and more interface to central government services, it does not allow any participation by the population in many forms of decision-making. It is therefore clear that this form of decentralization does not allow genuine community participation, as the local community does not make key decisions. Despite adopting education decentralization as part of the wider decentralization of government services in Malawi since 1998, enrolment of students, transfers of students and teachers in all public secondary schools are still controlled and administered by Educational Divisional Offices using rules, which are developed by the national headquarters of Ministry of Education (Chakwera, 2005). It is

very likely that community participation in CDSSs may be affected by such decisions to the detriment of student learning.

Delegation is when the central government allocates some of its own functions to the sub-national levels to carry out, but not to take full responsibility for and without abrogating its own public accountability for those functions and also without prejudice to its right to retract those functions (SACMEQ, 2004). The Education Act (1962) indicates that the local school committees have some sort of delegated authority. It may not be surprising to find that some members of school committees do not take their roles seriously as they feel that they are merely delegated to accomplish certain functions at the school on behalf of other people hence they do not take responsibility for the decisions made. This perception may hinder the local school committee from initiating new projects and innovations at the local school. Furthermore, it may sometimes happen that well-reasoned decisions by school committees end up being quashed by authorities higher in the education hierarchy thereby frustrating their participation in the decision making process of the school. However, if implemented properly, delegation can help to improve education administration, which will consequently improve education services.

Devolution involves the central government giving full responsibility and public accountability for certain functions (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). This is generally considered as representing a more comprehensive and genuine approach to decentralization of the management process. As Adamolekun et al (1990) cited in SACMEQ (2004) observed, for countries that adopt devolution model, decentralization is

considered and perceived as an in depth reform which is both a fundamental and essential part of national development. According to Malawi National Decentralization Policy, which was adopted in 1998, the main reasons why the government decided to decentralize its functions were to consolidate democracy and to act as a strategy for poverty reduction through efficient use of resources (GoM, 1998). In this form it appears to be certain that the government desired a devolution type of decentralization so as to ensure that members of the local communities handle a significant number of its key decisions. Being key institutions, where members of local communities have significant ownership, CDSSs are ideal places to evaluate how the local communities are participating in issues of management, development and decision-making. Of course, decisions made at a local level may not necessarily be democratic. The study therefore also sought to explore the extent to which the members of the local communities embrace the ideals of democracy in the way they run these schools.

Privatization is another form of decentralization where the government divests itself of powers hitherto considered its prerogative in favor of non-governmental organization bodies (SACMEQ, 2004). In effect privatization means handing over control of public services to private bodies irrespective of their basic motives to have those powers. Privatization may therefore not guarantee the involvement of more participants in the decision-making process let alone the shifting of decision-making authority to the lower position in the hierarchy. Shaeffer (1994) recommends that the body, which may be allowed to take control of public services, must be a non-profit making organization. It

should be appreciated that the decentralization of educational services in Malawi has so far not involved privatization of public schools.

In theory it may appear that privatization of public educational services cannot enhance community participation, as community ownership of the services is reduced. It should however be appreciated that some CDSSs in Malawi may at present, be running like private schools where members of staff make unilateral decisions for the school without involving the members of the local community. Worse still, the needs of the local community may not be adequately taken into account when making such decisions.

From the explanation above it is clear that the decentralization of education in Malawi at the moment is at best that of deconcentration and delegation although there has been so much talk about devolving education services to local authorities. According to the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) (undated) cited in SACMEQ (2004), when responsibilities are transferred to the school level the two terms deconcentration and devolution change: transferring responsibilities to school-based professionals is called 'School-based management' while giving authority to an elected school board might better be called 'School-based governance'. Obviously, it seems reasonable to suggest that it is the later that adequately allows the involvement of local communities in the management of schools and therefore ideal for promotion of genuine community participation that improves education services. Stinnette (1993) however cautions that for decentralization to be successful in promoting genuine community participation, the local authority must not only be given resources and authority over

those resources but should also be properly equipped or trained to carry out its role. In the context of decentralization of education services in Malawi, one may wish to find out what role school committees are playing in the management of CDSSs and whether they are properly equipped to carry out that role.

2.16 Summary of the Chapter

The changing of DEC to CDSSs was one of the landmark policies which were aimed at improving secondary education in Malawi. One of the definitions of education policy is that it is the goals for the education system and the actions that should be taken to achieve them (Reimers and McGinn, 1995). Scholars agree that in order for policy change to achieve its goal there is a need to plan and implement it carefully. They argue that the policy making process is cyclic and consists of several stages. Proper management at each of these stages is necessary in order to achieve the intended goal. Adequate consultation, communication and involvement by the key stakeholders in the policy are necessary for the success of the policy.

Like any public policy change, the conversion of DEC to CDSSs otherwise known as the CDSS Policy required a thorough understanding by the key stakeholders about what the policy entailed. The term community is complex as it is defined differently by different people. Community schools are therefore understood differently, however the literature in this study seems to agree that it is a school which offers education to the disadvantaged children of a particular area and where a high level of community participation in the day-to-day management of the school exists. Community schools therefore differ from other public schools in terms of their funding sources, curriculum

and management system. The CDSS policy however stated that its ultimate aim was to create a unified secondary education system in which equal access to quality education could be guaranteed. However, for this to be achieved proper communication, sensitization and training of the key stakeholders was necessary. Some scholars agree that the community participation element in the management of community schools makes the students in these schools to perform better than other public schools. It was the wish of this study to find out the role community participation was playing in the management of CDSSs and why these schools were performing poorer than conventional schools.

The literature has however revealed that the term ‘Participation’ is complex as it has different meanings. Scholars actually agree that participation has a range of meanings, from ‘pseudo’ participation to ‘genuine’ participation and it is the later that improves education in schools. In community schools, just like in other public schools, members of the community participate in the management of schools through SMC and PTA committees. The community therefore participates in various issues such as school development projects, curriculum implementation, monitoring of teaching and learning processes, disciplinary issues and many other issues. The members of the local community therefore need to be aware of their roles and be properly empowered to carry out those roles effectively.

Hadad and Demisky (1995) argue that before making a policy decision, each policy option must be carefully evaluated so as to ensure that the adopted policy is desirable and affordable not only to the policy-makers themselves, but also to the rest of the

stakeholders of the policy. Furthermore the policy which is adopted for implementation must also be feasible considering the context the policy is to be introduced in. It should be worthwhile to find out how desirable and affordable is the CDSS policy to various stakeholders in the schools. Hadad and Demsky (1995) further state that once the policy has been in place long enough to produce results, a policy assessment check can take place. After seven years since the formulation of this policy, it was appropriate time to assess the impact of this policy.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methods And Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the study design and methodology. It describes how the study was carried out in terms of how the data was collected and analyzed. The study was guided by theories related to the interactive paradigm where knowledge is viewed as socially constructed. According to Hartwell (1994:4), this paradigm “describes the process of participation, dialogue and negotiations which leads to properly supported political decisions about education”. Hartwell argues that interactive, rather than simply rational and technical approach is essential when changes are sought in such areas as: curriculum, the role of teachers, parents, local community and above all examination and selection procedures. “Based on the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed, it is believed that through interaction of different stakeholders in education, knowledge about education can be developed, acquired and shared” (Macjessie-Mbewe, 2004a: 310). The study focused on the views of participants in CDSSs in order to understand how the role of community participation in the management of the schools is shaping the outcome of these schools. The views of these participants were solicited through interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires and observations in order to get the information that is grounded in the participants’ experiences.

3.2 Research Design and Methodology

The overall approach that guided this study was a qualitative phenomenological design. Quoting English, and English, (1958), Cohen and Manion (1994:29) argue that “in its broadest meaning, phenomenology is a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value; and one which sees behavior as determined by the phenomena of experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality”. This design was used to explore deeply into the experiences of parents, teachers, members of SMCs or PTAs, students and graduates of MCDECs. With the exception of the MCDEC graduates, the rest were main stakeholders at local CDSSs and as such they were expected to have genuine experiences of how community participation in the management of the schools is shaping the outcome of these schools.

The main issue here was to get a true picture of community participation not only as at present but also during the time when these schools were called DEC. The inclusion of graduates of DEC was to ensure that the views of people who are most familiar with life in these schools before they were converted into CDSSs are assured. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003:97), in a phenomenological study “the researcher seeks to understand the deeper meaning of a person’s experiences and how she articulates these experiences”. The study therefore was set out to find out the participants’ understanding of their experiences with community participation as it relates to the management of CDSSs.

Merriam (1988: 19) observes that “qualitative researchers are interested in meaning; how people make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they interpret these

experiences and how they structure their social world”. Many scholars in Malawi have admitted that the quality of education taking place in CDSSs is very poor (Macjessie-Mbewe, 2004; Chakwera 2005; Gwede, 2005). However the best people to describe the status of education and how best to improve it are the stakeholders themselves. This is particularly pertinent as most of the scholars use pass rates at national examinations as indicator for quality of education. The study therefore attempted to interact with the stakeholders and solicited suggestions from them on how best community participation should be handled, not only by the stakeholders themselves, but also by education officials in order to make a positive impact on the quality of education in the CDSSs.

Although qualitative paradigm was the main approach in this study, some quantitative data were also collected. The main reason why quantitative data was collected was to complement the qualitative data. In some sense, it can be said that a paradigm of choices was used as a methodology for data collection and analysis. According to Patton (1990:39), “A paradigm of choices rejects methodological orthodoxy in favor of methodological appropriateness as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality. The issue then becomes.... whether one has made sensible methods decisions given the purpose of the enquiry, the question being investigated and the resources available. The paradigm of choices recognizes that different methods are appropriate for different situations”.

3.3 Sample Population

The population of interest in this study comprised members of local communities and key participants and beneficiaries of the schools. The sample therefore included members

of SMCs or PTAs, parents, teachers, students and graduates of the former MCDECs. The investigation was mainly carried out in ten CDSSs, which were purposely selected in Chikwawa, Blantyre and Zomba districts. Cohen and Manion (1994: 89) argue, “in purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality. In this way they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs”. Some of the main factors that were taken into account when choosing the schools for the sample were: location of the school (i.e. whether the school was situated in the rural, semi urban or urban area), proprietorship (i.e. whether the school was established by the church, government or the local community itself), and historical background. In terms of historical background, an attempt was made to make sure that both old (those schools which were well established and functional during the DEC era) and new CDSSs (those which have been established after the CDSS policy was already in place) are included in the sample. The main reason for including old CDSSs was to find out how the introduction of the CDSSs policy in the schools has affected the peoples participation in the school. Some members in the local community are likely to remember how their participation in the school has changed as a result of the CDSS policy.

Considering that with the current level of Educational Decentralization in Malawi, education authorities at division and district levels may also affect the performance of local communities in their schools, the study was carried out in three districts in two Education Divisions. These districts were: Chikwawa and Blantyre in the South-West Education Division (SWED) and Zomba in the South-East Education Division (SEED).

For the sake of anonymity, to keep the names of the schools confidential, letters are used to represent the names of the CDSSs where the study was conducted as elaborated below.

In Chikwawa the study was carried out in three CDSSs: F, G and H. School F was chosen because of its long history and also because it is located in a typical rural area while school G is situated in a semi-urban area but has also a long history. The location of the school to some extent may determine the social and economic status of parents or guardians of the students at the school. It is more likely to find more parents who are more educated and have formal employment in urban areas than in rural areas. H was chosen because apart from being one of the old CDSSs in Malawi, it was established and is owned by the Church (Roman Catholic Church), though it is still a public school. These three schools in Chikwawa were among the most popular DEC, which enrolled students from various parts of the country and had boarding facilities, which were run by school administrations in conjunction with members of local communities.

In Blantyre the study was conducted in the CDSSs L, M and N. School L was chosen because apart from being in a typical rural area the school was established recently, in 2000 when DEC were already converted into CDSSs. The findings from the recently established schools would be compared with those from old schools. School M is located in a semi-urban area and has a small boarding facility for some students while school N is situated right in the city of Blantyre and its history dates back to 1970s.

In Zomba the study was conducted in four CDSSs: P, Q, R and S. Schools Q and R were chosen because apart from being in urban area, they also belonged to a group of CDSSs which was called Non Approved, and did not have their own premises but were using primary school classrooms. Initially, at the beginning of this study, these two schools being located at church grounds were thought to be owned by churches. However, during the study, it was revealed that the two schools were actually not connected to the church management. It transpired that the local communities around were simply borrowing the church premises for the CDSSs and that they were in the process of constructing their own premises outside the church grounds. School P was the only approved CDSS in the Municipality of Zomba where the study was conducted and was chosen in order to compare its findings with those found in the City of Blantyre. School S is owned by the Roman Catholic Church and was chosen in order to compare its findings with what was found at H which was another CDSS owned by the Church but found in Chikwawa district. The following table shows the number of participants in the study (excluding head teachers) at each of the CDSSs.

CDSS	Number of parents or guardians	Number of students	Number of teachers
F	4	8	6
G	1	7	8
H	3	6	5
L	5	6	7
M	1	5	5
N	1	7	5
P	4	6	6
Q	1	8	6
R	1	7	7
S	3	5	5

Table 1. Number of respondents in the study at the CDSSs

It should be noted here that the CDSSs in Malawi are classified into two types: Approved and Non Approved CDSSs. According to MoEST (1999), all CDSSs which were operating from their own premises were classified as Approved CDSSs while those CDSSs which were operating from borrowed premises, mostly primary schools, were classified as Non Approved and were given up to one year to build their own structures or else these CDSSs would be closed. Furthermore, from 1999, opening of a CDSS in an area was supposed to be done only after the community has constructed its own buildings. At the time the study was conducted, some CDSSs that were declared Non Approved at the time when DEC's were converted into CDSSs, were found to be still Non Approved despite acquiring their own buildings. Of course the majority of Non Approved CDSSs were still operating from borrowed premises. However, it was learnt that since

the time DEC's were converted into CDSSs, no school had ever been closed for using borrowed premises. As other researchers have also observed, in Malawi implementation of education policies is indeed problematic (Chimombo, 1999; Chimombo and Chonzi, 2000; Kadzamira and Rose, 2001; Rose, 2003a).

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Prior to data collection period, letters were written to Education Division Managers in both South West Education Division (SWED) and South East Education Division (SEED), requesting them to allow me conduct the study in their areas. After obtaining a written permission from Division Managers, I went to the schools and sought permission from the head teachers to allow me conduct the study at their schools. After getting permission from head teachers, letters were then sent through the head teachers to the respondents, particularly parents or members of school committee. It should be noted that the letters of invitation to respondents were only sent after thorough consultation with the head teacher and in most cases it was the head teachers themselves who were taking the leading role in deciding as to when the respondents should come for the interview or discussion.

Several methods were used for collecting information from the stakeholders. For each of the ten CDSSs, Focused Group Discussions(s) (FGD), In-depth Interviews, Questionnaires and Observations were used to collect the data. During the period of data collection in this study, I also attended two PTA general meetings at two of the CDSSs where I observed teachers and parents discussing various issues concerning education in their schools. Apart from the stakeholders at local schools, data was also collected from

graduates of the former Distance Education Centers (DECs) and officials at Educational Division Offices. The following is an explanation as to how these techniques were used to collect the data.

3.4.1 Focused Group Discussions (FGDs)

At each of the ten CDSSs, one student Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held involving school prefects. Since they interact more with both parents and teachers, the students in some sense act as a link between parents and the staff at the school hence they are in a better position to know the weaknesses and strengths of both parents and staff. The school prefects were chosen because, firstly as student leaders, they are expected to be more mature mentally than the other students considering the fact that they are approved in their positions by the school leadership. The prefects are therefore expected to be more aware of the kind of community participation taking place at their school. Furthermore, at most schools the number of prefects does not exceed ten; hence even if all prefects were to be present for the discussion, the group would still be small enough for effective discussion. Actually, Mashall and Rossman (1995) define Focus Group Interviewing as a technique of getting oral information from a group generally composed of 7 to 10 people (although they range as small as 4 and as large as 12). Marshall and Rossman contend further that the people to be selected into the focus group discussions must share certain characteristics that are relevant for the study. In this study, the largest group had eight students while the smallest group had five students. The FGD is more appropriate for collecting data from students than the use of questionnaires or one-to-one interview because it ensures that every student participates

in the discussion. As Macjessie-Mbewe (2004a: 312) observed, "schools in Malawi are examination oriented and sometimes when you conduct one to one interview with students or administer questionnaires to them, they think it is an examination and they become tensed up". The language used in the discussions was a mixture of English and local language and this was deliberately done in order to enable some students who had difficulties in expressing themselves in one of the two languages to participate freely. The discussions were tape-recorded and later transcribed. The transcribed Chichewa responses were later translated into English and analyzed.

It was proposed that another FGD involving parents particularly those involved in SMC or PTA, would be held at each of the ten CDSSs. In fact it was planned that all members of school committees at each school would form the focus group for parents. However, during the study it was found that although all the ten CDSSs had school committees, most members in these committees did not turn up for the interview. This was worrisome as they had been communicated to in time and most of them had confirmed of their participation in the study through their head teachers. However, some information gathered from the schools indicates that most members of school committees want assurance of payment of some form of remuneration when attending such meetings. According to some head teachers, the culture of wanting allowances when attending such meetings is being promoted by some NGOs who pay them when conducting their studies or meetings. After finding that it was difficult to get enough members of school committees for the Focus Group Interview, I resolved to include any parent or guardian who had ward(s) at the school and this enabled me to get groups of three to five parents

in five of the ten CDSSs. Of course each group had at least a member of the school committee. For the remaining five CDSSs, only the chairperson or vice-chairperson showed up for the discussion as a result an in-depth interview was held with them instead of the planned FGD. The interviews and discussions with parents, which were mainly done in the local language, were also tape-recorded, transcribed and later translated into English. Marshall and Rossman (1995: 80) argues that “when more than one person participates (e.g. focus group interview), the interview process gathers a wide variety of information across a larger number of subjects than if there were fewer participants, the familiar trade-off between breadth and depth”. This argument implies that FGD accomplishes more breadth than depth in terms of the quality of the data collected. In order to ensure that the depth issue in the data collected was also addressed, another data collection technique called In-Depth Interviewing was therefore also used.

3.4.2 In-Depth Interviews

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003: 180) interviews are "hallmarks of qualitative research. In-depth interview takes the researcher into the participants' world". Patton (1990) categorizes interviews into three general types: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. In this study the general interview-guide approach where the interview is guided by a set of predetermined questions written on a piece of paper was the major strategy used for the interviews. However the informal conversation approach was also used. This was accomplished by engaging the interviewees on some issues without notifying them that the conversation was actually part of data collection for the study and

certainly without taking notes or tape recording during the conversation. Of course the main points learnt through this informal conversation were later written down in a notebook to avoid forgetting them. The informal conversation as a technique of interviewing was actually very valuable because not only did it provide a kind of check and balance to the information obtained through interview guide approach and other methods, but also the interviewees were keen at releasing more information about their experiences during the informal conversation.

The formal in-depth interviews, which were conducted using interview guides, were particularly done with head teachers of each of the ten CDSSs. Furthermore, the in-depth interviews were also done with chairpersons of school committees in the five CDSSs where the FGD involving parents failed to take place because only the chairperson came for the interview. The interview questions comprised of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. According to Gitterson et. al. (1990), by exploring topics in-depth using open-ended questions the qualitative approach becomes successful in creating a better understanding of why and how people behave as they do.

Although the interviews with head teachers were generally conducted in English and Chichewa languages, which were used interchangeably, Chichewa was mainly used when interviewing parents. This was deliberately done to avoid making the parents feel that the interviewer was proud and pompous as in Malawi; the speaking of English to people whose academic background is not known is generally considered as a sign of pride. Furthermore, most parents in Malawi do not understand English well enough hence using

English in the interview would confuse them and that may also affect the quality of responses they might have given. The use of interview guide was not intended, in any way, to achieve uniformity or prevent the respondents from taking initiative to let their perspectives known, but to help the researcher manage the interview since completely unstructured interviews are difficult to manage (Parahoo, 1997).

3.4.3 Questionnaires

Basically three different types of questionnaires were used targeting three different groups of people namely: head teachers of the CDSSs where the study was conducted, teachers (also in the CDSSs where the study took place), and people who were former students of MCDEs. Firstly, one questionnaire was given to each of the head teachers of the CDSSs where the study took place. The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect information about the school, especially on issues that were related to school management and community participation. This questionnaire was given to the head teacher of the CDSS to be filled several days before the interviews were held. In fact, the questionnaires were given to head teachers at the time of arranging for the interviews and were collected on the day of interviews. The information gathered through this questionnaire did not only compliment that which was collected through observation but it was also used for further probing during the interviews.

Secondly, apart from the questionnaire that was given to the head teachers, another set of questionnaire was prepared and given to teachers in the ten CDSSs. In all, a total of sixty (60) teachers responded to this questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire was to

learn more about experiences and opinions of ordinary teachers about issues of community participation at the schools they were teaching. This information was valuable as in some way it also provided a crosschecking mechanism to the information that was given through interviews with head teachers, parents and students. These questionnaires were handed to teachers through their head teachers at the time when the questionnaire for general information about the school was given and they consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. After completing the questionnaires the teachers handed them back to the head teacher and were collected from the school together with the questionnaire for the general information about the school.

Lastly, a third questionnaire was prepared and given to people who had attended their secondary education at DEC. A total of twenty (20) former students of these DEC: ten males and ten females completed these questionnaires. These questionnaires were basically trying to get information about the contribution of community participation in DEC. I decided to involve former students of DEC to get this information because I felt that some of the teachers and parents involved in this study might never have been active in school administration during the DEC era hence may not have adequate information about community participation in these schools. Since these students were no longer in the schools, a technique called snowball sampling was used to get respondents for this questionnaire. According to Cohen and Manion (1994:89) snowball sampling is a technique where “researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics that they require. These people are then used as informants to identify others who qualify for inclusion and these, in return identify yet others”. It

should be admitted here that this technique did not succeed as planned. Out of the twenty respondents, only five were identified through snowballing. The rest were identified by me and through my colleagues who were not part of the respondents in this study.

As data collection instruments, questionnaires were used to gather information that complimented the one obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. The main reason why questionnaires were used in this case was to allow a wider variety of stakeholders and actors to have their say on the issue of community participation in the management of CDSSs. Macjessie-Mbewe (2004:310) observed that “based on the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed, it is believed that through interaction of different stakeholders in education, knowledge about education can be developed, acquired and shared”.

Questionnaires were more ideal for collecting data from teachers and former DEC students than from parents and head teachers for two reasons. Firstly, being key informants in this study head teachers and parents were required to give more detailed information in this study hence questionnaires would not be suitable to adequately extract it. Most of the vital information from these key stakeholders came through follow-up questions in the In-Depth Interviews and Focus Group Interviews. Secondly, teachers and former DEC students were able to complete the questionnaires during their free time and this gave me the opportunity to concentrate on interviewing the key stakeholders and making observations in the schools.

3.4.4 Observation

Observation was another technique that was used to gather information about the schools and also about the community participation that was taking place in the schools. As Mashall and Rossman (1995:79) said “observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study”. Throughout the data collection period observations were made. There was no observation schedule, but events and behaviors were simply noted and recorded in a notebook. Actually, Marshall and Rossman (1995) argue that observation can range from highly structured, detailed notation of behavior guided by a checklist, to a more holistic description of events and behaviors. In this study, the observation used was basically that of a simple holistic description of events and behavior. This was important as this method assumes that behavior is purposive and expressive of deeper values and beliefs (Mashall and Rossman, 1995). Observation therefore complimented the data obtained through the other methods and this helped me to understand the data better.

3.4.5 Information from Key Informants

After collecting data from key stakeholders at a local level in the CDSSs, I went to Educational Division Offices both in the South-West Education Division (SWED) and the South-East Education Division (SEED). In these offices, I met officials in the departments of Planning and also in the department of Education Methods Advisory Services (EMAS). Furthermore, I also went to the office of Malawi Schools Parents Association (MASPA) and met the president of this association. At these offices, the authorities tried to clarify some issues that were raised by stakeholders in the local

CDSSs and this increased my understanding of the phenomenon of community participation in the CDSSs further. According to Hadad (2002), this process of bringing policy issues raised at the grassroots level to officials high in the bureaucratic ladder is called 'backward mapping'.

3.4.6 Issue of Consent

According to Robson (1993), it is very necessary to have an informed consent from people participating in a study. Great effort was therefore made to explain this study thoroughly to all participants while assuring them of great confidentiality and anonymity their information would be handled with. This was done in order to ensure that interviewees participate in this study willingly. Furthermore, an informed consent form was prepared the contents of which were read to the participants before the interview started. Apart from introducing the researcher and the topic the consent form emphasized three important points to the interviewees. Firstly, that their participation was entirely voluntary; secondly that they were free to refuse to answer any question and lastly, that they were free to withdraw their participation in the study at any time they wished to do so. After ensuring that the interviewee has understood this issue of consent, he/she was requested to sign on one form to show that he/she had agreed to participate in the interview. According to Robson (1993), the researcher is supposed to keep the signed copy while the interviewee keeps one unsigned form. However, it must be admitted here that most participants felt that the issue of consent was unnecessary. Participants argued that the mere fact that they traveled all the way from their homes to take part in the interview meant that they had understood the content of the letter of invitation that was

sent to them and that they were willing to participate in the study. Furthermore, they also said that issues of community participation and social development are not matters requiring excessive confidentiality. However, I had to persuade them to understand my position and sign the informed consent form and indeed, they signed but most of them chose not to take the unsigned form.

3.5 Piloting of the study

According to Blaxter et al (2001:135) “Piloting is the process whereby you try out the research techniques and methods which you have in mind, see how well they work in practice and, if necessary, modify your plans accordingly.” In this study, the piloting was done at a CDSS in Zomba. This process revealed that some of the questions on the questionnaires and interview guides were not clear enough as some important data could not be extracted from respondents and some questions made respondents to repeat what they had said before. Furthermore, the behavior of some respondents was found to be not as anticipated, for example some teachers did not respond to questionnaires and some parents did not report for interviews after giving assurances about their participation. This process however helped me to modify and improve my research techniques and instruments in readiness for the data collection process.

3.6 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data in this study was a continuous process. It began when the process of data collection started. From the time fieldwork started, transcription and translation of the interviews and discussions took place. The themes and insights that were emerging as data collection continued were taken note of and recorded. This process later led to the

writing of analytical memos. Rossman and Rallis (2003: 271) argue that analysis is an on going operation and that "throughout a study you are describing, analyzing and interpreting data, although different activities may be more focused and instrumental at various times". After the fieldwork, the data was reorganized and read over and over again in order to familiarize with them. The new insights, categories and themes, which were emerging helped me to critically look at previous ideas and indeed some of my previous ideas were revised as my understanding of the data and the topic became better and better. As Rossman and Rallis (2003: 281) state, the process of re-reading the data "enables you to become familiar in intimate ways with what you have learned".

At the end of re-reading and re-listening, a number of themes, categories and insights were made. These were once again looked at again and again to find out whether some could be condensed and be expressed as one major category or theme that could be developed from the available data. This process helped me very much to come up with themes that were encompassing and grounded in the available data.

After the themes and categories were generated, they in turn were used to code the data. "Coding represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized and put back together in new ways" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:57). Rossman and Rallis (2003) point out that in coding the data, one will have to be clear about what words or phrases elaborate each concept. It should be noted here that both indigenous and analyst-constructed categories were developed. Indigenous categories are those expressed by the participants while analyst-constructed categories are those coming from the researcher

which are identified through his/her experience with the topic or from reading related literature (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). Each category had a theme that went together with that particular category and each code for a theme or a category had an arrow pointing at the supporting data on the page.

The qualitative data from observations were mainly organized in the form of a concept map while the data from questionnaires were organized in the form of frequency tables. The quantitative information which was obtained through questionnaires was mainly used to compliment the qualitative data obtained through interviews and in some cases it helped me to understand the qualitative data better. After organizing the data into a concept map and tables, a story started developing. I started telling this story to my colleagues using analytical memos for their comments in order to help me in the interpretation of the findings. While taking into account my colleagues' comments I also carefully tried to find out what each category said and how it was related to the whole theme and the research questions. Lastly, using information gained from the data, study of related literature and comments from colleagues, interpretation about the findings of this study was made. According to Patton (2002), interpretation means attaching significance to what is found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings and otherwise imposing order.

3.7 Limitation of the study

The findings of this study are generally limited to three districts of Chikwawa, Blantyre and Zomba; hence they may not be generalized to other districts or the country of Malawi

as a whole. Great care was however taken in the selection of the sampled schools so that various categories of CDSSs in Malawi, in terms of their area of location, history and proprietorship were considered. It was hoped that the features of most CDSSs in Malawi would be covered in these categories thereby making the findings of this study more relevant to the situation in Malawi.

It is however worth thinking about the fact that the national education statistics suggest that the rates of enrolment, admissions, dropout, examination performance etc. varies from one education division to another with some divisions doing generally better than others (EMIS, 2005). This raises the suspicion that probably community participation in schools may also depend on the educational division in which the school is located. The inclusion of urban and rural schools in the sample however, in a way helped to compare the way issues of community participation are handled by people from the two areas. Furthermore the inclusion of successful people who did their secondary school at a DEC irrespective of the location of their schools helped to give a rough picture of community participation in the schools from the DEC era.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

There were mainly three features that were made to ensure trustworthiness of the study. Firstly, there was triangulation of data sources and methods. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), triangulation entails drawing from several data sources, methods, investigators or theories to inform the same question or to strengthen the conclusion that were made. In this study data was collected from several sources such as head teachers, teachers, parents, students, education officials and former students of DEC.

Furthermore, several methods such as interviews, questionnaires and observation were also used to collect the data. Secondly, critical friends or colleagues were used to critique the ideas in this study. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003) critical friends are small groups of peers working together to test out ideas, critique one another's work, offer alternative conceptualizations, and provide both emotional and intellectual support. Lastly, before the instruments were used to collect data, they were piloted.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings And Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the main findings of the study and their discussion. Since there were four research questions which this study was attempting to find their answers, this chapter has also been divided into four main areas. In the first section, findings and discussions about what the stakeholders in the CDSSs understand to be the definition of a community secondary school are presented. This is followed by findings of the enquiry as to whether members of the local communities were sensitized or oriented about their roles in the management of the CDSSs. In the third section, findings on how the local communities were participating in the running of CSSs are presented and discussed and lastly the findings about the impact of community participation in the CDSSs have also been presented and discussed.

4.2 Definition of a Community Secondary School as understood by various stakeholders

In order to understand the role community participation was playing in the management of CDSSs, the study started by looking at what the stakeholders understood as the meaning of CDSS. The purpose here was to find out what the members of the local

community understood to be the main difference between CDSSs and the other public schools in terms of the role of the local community in the running of these schools.

The stakeholders defined a community school in different ways. Some defined it as a school whose pupils are selected from the surrounding primary schools. In this definition the geographical area from which students at the school come is emphasized. This definition sounds plausible in as far as the meaning of the term ‘Community’ is concerned particularly in rural areas. However, a closer look at the schools revealed that this definition is not adequate. For example the study found that a significant number of students studying in these schools were actually coming from distant homes whose villages may not be described as forming part of the community surrounding the school. According to the CDSS policy the catchment area of a CDSS was supposed not to exceed the radius of 10km from the school (MoEST. 1999). This study however found that some students come to these schools from over 20 km away. Obviously the cohesiveness of the members in the community, which is necessary for cooperation in developmental issues, may be compromised when the geographical area is too large.

Some students said that they joined the school after getting transferred from other schools in search of better education. Some of such students operated from self-boarding facilities near the schools (they rent a house or a room and operate from there to the school). One student said, “As for me I did not get selected to this school, but the higher pass rates this school is known for made me to seek a transfer to this school through the Educational Division Office. Of course I had to lie that my parents were transferred to a duty station

closer to this school. However, I knew that I would be operating from a self-boarding premise nearby. All I wanted was a school that could help me pass exams”. Rose (2003b) argues that the geographical definition is problematic if applied to urban schools because the people residing in the same area may place their allegiances to different schools. Indeed, this study found that some of the members of school committees particularly in urban schools actually come from different areas of the town. Some members actually pass by other CDSSs when going to their schools.

Other people, mostly teachers defined CDSS as a secondary school, which has substandard infrastructures and where the less intelligent students particularly from poor families are selected to pursue their studies. Concurring with this definition one parent said, “You see, the government does not want CDSSs to have high quality infrastructures. Even the DECAs that had good infrastructures, constructed with funding from IDA, were simply changed into Conventional Secondary Schools.” An official at one of the Education Division Offices admitted that indeed some of the DECAs that had good quality infrastructures were elevated to the status of CSSs and were now treated as such although selection of students into such schools was still from the surrounding communities as well. He further disclosed that recently, using funds from the World Bank, the government had constructed several secondary schools of high quality infrastructures. However, these schools were not CDSSs although students in these schools were also selected from the surrounding communities. The definition of Community Secondary Schools in Malawi is therefore not clear and this may have a negative impact on Community Participation in the schools. Parents and members of the local communities

may feel that the government created these schools in order to suppress them from crying out for genuine secondary schools in their areas. This indeed may result in the withdrawal of community support to the schools as Chakwera (2005) observed.

The allegation that most of the students selected into these schools are from poor families can be challenged. Since selection into these schools is mainly done on merit by Ministry of Education authorities, it is inconceivable to imagine that the Ministry officials would know the economic status of students during the selection process, let alone using this knowledge to select them into these schools. More over the ultimate wish of the government for converting DECS into CDSSs was to create a unified secondary education system in which equal access to quality education could be guaranteed (MoEST, 1999). The apparent presence of more students from poor families in these schools is probably due to the poor quality of education prevailing in these schools, which makes students from richer families to transfer to better schools.

Other people said that a CDSS is a secondary school that is owned by the people in the same area in which the school is established. In this definition the key word is ownership. Indeed, according to Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002), common ownership of the school by the local community appears to be an important defining feature of a community schools. However, since in Malawi the government built some of these schools and that they still remain public schools, it is possibly important to describe the characteristics of ownership in order to uphold this definition. Some people in this study, though very few, seemed to take this into account when they defined CDSSs as a day

secondary schools in which the local communities are actively involved in its day-to-day management. High level of community participation in the management of the school seems to be the defining feature of a community school (Miller-Grandvaux and Yodder, 2002). However, there is a need to examine the nature of participation: whether the community is participating merely in the use of the service used in resource mobilization or involved in real decision making in the school. According to Rose (2003) the quality of education in schools can improve tremendously if communities participate in real decision making of the schools.

This study has found that people have different understandings of what Community Schools are. These differences are not restricted to members of the local communities alone. Even the teachers in these schools seemed to have no common definition of these schools. The differences in the understanding about the concept of CDSS may have implications on how the various stakeholders participate in the management of these schools. Of course, community and participation are complex terms as Shaeffer (1994), Bray (2000) and Rose (2003) observed. It was therefore necessary for the proper definition of these schools to be made clear to all stakeholders when the schools were being established.

As already pointed out, according to Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) a community school is where members of the local community participate actively in day-to-day management of the school. It seems that if this definition were upheld, the quality of education in these schools would have been better. However, to be effective the

community needs to be appropriately trained and empowered (Shaeffer, 1994; Rose, 2003). Literature in Malawi has revealed that the common type of community participation taking place in Malawi is that of pseudo type where members of the local community merely use the service or contribute the resources for the service but are not involved in real decision making process about the service (Kadzamira and Rose, 2001; Rose, 2003a; Macjessie-Mbewe, 2004a). Appropriate sensitization and training of members of the local communities therefore seems to be vital in helping to improve their participation. The findings of this study suggest that the CDSS policy was probably formulated without proper involvement of the key stakeholders. Furthermore, no adequate communication to the stakeholders was made in order for them to understand what the policy was all about. These findings corroborate well with those of Hadad and Demisky (1995), who found that lack of communication and consultation with stakeholders during formulation of policies makes their implementation problematic thereby rendering the achievement of their goals difficult. Thorough consultation with stakeholders is indeed necessary in order to come up with acceptable, affordable and feasible policies.

4.3 Sensitization and orientation of local communities about their role(s) in the management of CDSSs

The second question, which the study attempted to answer, was whether members of the local communities were sensitized about their roles in the running of CDSSs. Community participation in the management of schools is highly advocated for in modern development studies (Rose, 2003). However it is very likely that its role can depend on

the level of awareness on the part of the participants as to what they should do, how, when and why they should do it.

When asked whether they had been sensitized about their roles in the process of school administration all parents most of whom were members of school committees indicated that they had never been sensitized. This information was collaborated with that from head teachers who said that there were no programs for training or briefing members of school committees about their roles in the schools. This study has therefore found that the local communities in these schools were never sensitized about their roles in the management of the CDSSs. Worse still; they had never attended any in-service training course about school management. This is in contrast to the promise the government made at the time when DEC's were converted into CDSSs where it was mentioned that guidelines concerning the roles of school committees in these schools would be given (MoEST, 1999). At one school, the chairman of PTA said, "We do not really know what our job description is except that we meet to discuss and pass resolutions about issues in the school which the head teacher brings to us". This implies that the performance of the PTA in this case is at the mercy of the head teacher because the committee is restricted to discuss only those issues, which the head teacher wants to be discussed. While committee members in some CDSSs said that they were even not briefed as to what they were expected to do in their various elected positions, others said they were briefed by the previous chairperson of their committee but since that initial briefing, they have never attended any meeting to refresh their memories. Furthermore the briefing was too general and largely irrelevant to the needs of CDSS management. One chairman of PTA at

another school said, “Even a farmer does not just use the tools continuously, without sharpening them. He has to sharpen them otherwise they can become so blunt that they cannot help in accomplishing his objective of getting good yield”. Rose (2003), argues that for the community to genuinely participate in management of schools they need appropriate training.

It was learnt in this study that in most cases, whatever the members of the local community were doing in the school, was simply a continuation from what had been happening in the past. They were not really taking their own initiatives and innovations to ensure that whatever they do is a proper response to the needs of their school. In fact, most people do not know whether their role in these schools is any different from what it is in the other public schools. It was also noted in this study that some school committee members had held various positions in school committees of primary schools; in fact some were also serving as committee members in other schools at the time this study was conducted. It is therefore very likely that the committee members use their experiences in primary schools to serve the CDSSs. It is obviously clear from the CDSS Policy that CDSSs supposed to be managed differently from the way primary schools and let alone other secondary schools are managed. The importance of training members of school committees can therefore not be overemphasized. Given the low literacy and education levels of most communities in Malawi, training of the committees on their roles becomes paramount. (Chimombo and Kadzamira, 2001)

4.3.1 Availability of community-based School Committees in the CDSSs

Community-driven activities at a school are normally coordinated by school committees which are made up of parents. In trying to find out whether members of local communities were aware of their roles in the school this study also investigated the availability of school committees in the schools. It was found that in some schools there were two distinctive committees namely School Management Committee (SMC) and Parents and Teachers Association (PTA). In six out of the ten CDSSs there were both SMC and PTA committees available while the rest had only one committee. In the CDSSs where both committees existed one was generally more active than the other. PTA committee was however available at each of the ten CDSSs. All parents who were interviewed in this study were however unable to distinguish the functions of the two committees. Likewise head teachers failed to confidently distinguish the roles of the two committees. Sensitization and orientation of members of the local communities about their role in the CDSSs was therefore lacking.

It was indeed learnt that in most cases where the two committees namely SMC and PTA co-exist, they either do similar things or come into conflict with each other. An official from the South-West Education Division (SWED) confirmed that indeed there were some conflicts between PTA and SMC in some schools where both committees were operational and he further said that because of these conflicts the division had advised schools to have PTA committee only at a school. However, according to GoM (2002b) one of the key functions of PTA committee is to take the SMC to account. One therefore wonders whether having only the PTA committee at a school does not compromise issues

of accountability. Furthermore, the removal of the SMC from the school may negatively affect issues of community participation at the school as the number of people involved in the school management is also reduced.

In the South-East Education Division (SEED) however, it was learnt that the division actually encourages schools to have both PTA and SMC at the same school. One official at the divisional office said that there has never been any serious problem regarding PTA and SMC committees co-existing at the same school. Indeed, in most of the CDSSs which were visited in this division it was found that there were both SMC and PTA committees although one committee was generally more active than the other. This interdivisional difference concerning the necessity of the two school committees coexisting at a school put to question the process of policy formulation and communication. It would seem then that individual Educational Divisions are free to make and implement their own policies.

Stakeholders in most of the schools which were visited however admitted that active participation of the membership in these committees was very poor. They said that most of the committees do not meet regularly and even when they meet, most of the committee members are never present. Chimombo and Kadzamira (2001) also made a similar observation in a study conducted at primary school level. According to Bisika (1994) the PTA and School Management Committees are supposed to be comprised of eight and nine members respectively. However, as Table 2 shows, all committees present in the CDSSs where the study took place were operating with very small membership.

Location	CDSS	Type of School Committee Present and Absent		Number of Active members				
		SMC	PTA	SMC		PTA		Total
				Male	Female	Male	Female	
Rural	F	Present	Present	1	0	2	1	4
	H	Absent	Present	0	0	3	1	4
	L	Absent	Present	0	0	4	1	5
	S	Absent	Present	0	0	3	2	5
Semi-Urban	G	Present	Present	2	0	2	1	5
	M	Absent	Present	0	0	2	1	3
Urban	N	Absent	Present	0	0	3	2	5
	P	Present	Present	2	0	3	3	8
	Q	Present	Present	3	3	5	2	13
	R	Present	Present	3	1	4	3	11

Table 2: School committee membership situation in the CDSSs

According to Bisika (1994: 52) “A school committee meeting cannot be held unless the chairperson and four other members, of whom two are parents of children attending the school, are present.” Although committee chairpersons were available in most of the CDSSs where the study took place the number of active committee members available indicated that it was difficult to form a quorum for meetings. One therefore wonders whether such committees could make appropriate and acceptable decisions for the schools. Some parents however observed that lack of orientation and sensitization about

their roles was one of the contributing factors to their lack of commitment to committee meetings.

The study also found that the most active committees (PTAs) had only 70% of its membership actively involved in its activities. However, such committees were very few (only two of the ten schools visited had such a membership, the rest of the CDSSs had committees whose membership was between three and five persons). One chairperson of PTA at one of the schools said that most people who are elected into school committees lose interest in the work of the committee due to lack of training and possibly other incentives. The incentives that can motivate people to be active at a local school may include development projects themselves. As one PTA chairman said, “Sometimes it happens that people become active when there is a project. Once the project is over they relax. When we call for a meeting just to discuss general issues at the school, they rarely come”. The chairperson’s remarks indicate that the members of school committees do not know that their role in the school is much more than merely looking after development projects.

When asked whether financial incentives in the form of allowances could help to increase the morale of members of school committees and increase their participation, most people responded by saying that monetary incentives are not really necessary. “What matters here is to see the lives of our children improving in these schools,” commented one parent. Since Most of the members of school committees are parents whose children are currently studying in these schools their children’s comfort and success would be

their main motivating factor. Perhaps financial incentives may be necessary to coax ordinary members of the local communities who do not have wards in the school to participate actively in the school.

Some people said that government authorities usually discourage members of the local communities when they fail to support the projects that the community embarks on. They also said that sometimes, school staff particularly head teachers also discourage them, when they misappropriate the resources the community contributes at the school. In four of the ten CDSSs, I found heaps of ready bricks that the communities had molded in anticipation of help in the form of cement, iron sheets and other materials but the help was not forthcoming. At another school, I was told that the previous head teacher had been interdicted and later on demoted and transferred to another school because of misappropriating the funds, which the community had contributed.

In terms of gender balancing in school committees, the stakeholders in most of the schools agreed that issues of gender are known and taken into account when members of committees are elected. They said that they try to make sure that the number of women and men in the school committee balances. However, experience had shown that most of the women elected were less committed to their work such that in the course of time, they become under-represented. When one chairperson of PTA who was a lady was asked why more women abscond from school committee meetings, she said that women are generally busy at home with household chores; hence they prefer to be at home when they see and feel that they do not have ideas to contribute at the meeting. One parent

concurred and said that due to lack of appropriate knowledge about their roles at the school, people abscond from committee meetings because they believe that their presence at the meeting does not make any difference.

In some of the CDSSs, it was learnt that the process of electing or co-opting new members of school committees was not transparent. At one of the rural CDSSs, one of the teachers whom I encountered informally expressed his dissatisfaction with the performance of the school committee and he accused the head teacher of having a hand in bringing members of his church into the school committee thereby ensuring that it does not critically put him to account. At this CDSS only a PTA committee existed and all members of this committee except the chairman belonged to the church, which the head teacher also belonged. He claimed that whenever a vacancy in the committee arises the head teacher ensures that a member from his church is co-opted into the committee. He also said that stakeholders at the school particularly teachers were worried that the committee itself rarely meets to discuss issues about the school and this was raising suspicion that possibly the members were meeting at their church to discuss issues about the school. While lack of democratically elected members in the school committee can be regarded as a problem, it was surprising to note that parents and other members of the local community had never complained about this situation in their PTA committee. Despite agreeing that most members in their school committee were not elected, parents in the FGD at this CDSS could not see it as a problem. This suggests that perhaps the lack of awareness about their roles in their CDSS makes them to think that whatever the head teacher does at the school was acceptable. This situation can have far reaching

implications. Firstly, the head teacher may become too powerful and arrogant such that ideas from other members of the community may be ignored to the disadvantage of the school. Secondly, members of the local community may react by withdrawing their support to the school. Indeed, according to Chakwera (2005) one of the immediate results of the conversion of DEC's into CDSSs was the withdrawal of community's support to the schools.

4.3.2 Knowledge about education policies documents

It is necessary for all stakeholders in education to have accurate knowledge about education policies so that they can play their roles properly. In Malawi most of the important education policies are found in two policy documents namely, the Education Act and the education Policy and Investment Framework (PIF). It was actually surprising to note that all school committee members and parents who were interviewed in this study indicated that they had never read nor been briefed about the Education Act and PIF. This therefore meant that these committee members and parents did not know what these documents say about community participation, let alone its importance in the running of the schools. Being important documents, one would have expected them to be readily available in the schools, at least in the head teacher's offices or staff room. However, in all the ten schools in which the study was conducted, only one head teacher was found in possession of a copy of the Education Act and none had a copy of the PIF.

Teachers, particularly head teachers are important facilitators of community participation. Since members of the local community are never sensitized about their roles at the school

as this study has revealed, they depend on the head teacher's knowledge to know what to do at the school. However as the following table shows most teachers in Malawi may not have appropriate knowledge about community participation because they have never read nor be made aware of the contents of the education's important policy documents such as the Education Act and PIF. The following table summarizes the teachers' awareness of the two policy documents in the CDSSs. A total of 113 teachers from all the ten CDSSs took part in this survey.

% Of teachers who have ever read the Education Act	25
% Of teachers who have ever read PIF	16
% Of teachers who have ever read both the Education Act and PIF	11

Table 3: Percentage of teachers who have ever read Educational Act and PIF in the CDSSs

At the time when the DEC's were converted into CDSSs, the Ministry of Education promised that guidelines about the role of SMCs would be given to the schools, however up to the time of the study, seven years later, these guidelines had not yet arrived at the

schools. According to teachers who had also taught in other CDSSs the situation is also the same in the other schools. Despite the recommendation of Chimombo and Kadzamira (2001: 28) that, “guidelines for PTAs, SMCs and all other relevant structures be developed as soon as possible by Ministry of Education together with any organization dealing with community mobilization,” nothing to that effect had come out by the time this study was conducted. The officials at the two Educational Division Offices admitted that these guidelines are indeed not yet ready and could not disclose when they will be available for the schools. This leaves the community in an awkward situation in as far as how their participation in the schools should be.

As already pointed out earlier, ordinary members of the local communities learn what to do at their schools from head teachers and members of SMC or PTA who themselves had never been trained. The new SMC and PTA committee members simply get updated about development projects at the school from the previous committees and the head teacher. The committee members also use their experience of involvement in primary school committees when carrying out their duties at the CDSS. This implies that at the local level, the schools are not managed differently from the way public primary schools are managed. It can be said then that the nature and degree of community participation prevailing in these schools does not qualify them to be community schools.

4.3.3 Education Decentralization

Decentralization is one of the government policies that the members of the local communities are aware of. Most participants in this study, particularly parents indicated

that they had heard about decentralization policy mainly through the radio and politicians. Some of the features of this policy that the members were aware of included the giving of power to the community to decide what development activities they needed in their area and to take part in the implementation of those activities. Some parents however indicated that they had attended training workshops where issues of decentralization were discussed. Some of the workshops which some of the parents said to have attended include the management of local forest reserves, management of Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) projects and community management of boreholes. The parents however lamented that they were not clear as to what this decentralization meant for their schools particularly CDSSs. Worse still the education authorities had never taken the initiative to brief them about decentralization in education. Some parents said that they had heard that some CDSSs would be made cost centers but could not understand what this meant to the schools let alone their participation in the management of these schools.

Related to the issue of decentralization, this study also found that the cluster system that was initiated after DECAs were converted into CDSSs was not serving some CDSSs well enough. According to MoEST (2000), under this system secondary schools both public and private, which are located in one area, were put into one group called a cluster and one school, usually a conventional secondary school was chosen as a cluster leader. The head teacher of the cluster leader school was responsible for coordinating the activities of the cluster. The main aim here was to make limited resources available to many schools particularly CDSSs to improve education in these schools. The government therefore put

some resources at cluster leader schools for members of the cluster to use and one of the resources was a paper-duplicating machine.

At one of the schools, members of the PTA committee complained that the cluster system was made without consulting or briefing the local school committees who are also important managers of the schools. They claimed that the system was benefiting cluster leader schools that were using the resources like their own. They gave as an example the fact that some teaching and learning materials are provided to their schools through the cluster leader and sometimes such materials do not get to their schools but are used at the cluster leader school itself. A chairman of PTA committee at one of the CDSSs said that their school had been finding difficulties in processing exam papers to the extent that they were using even their development fund to photocopy the exam papers for their students despite their cluster having a duplicating machine. He claimed that every time their school asked for duplication of papers at their cluster leader school, they were told that the machine was out of order. Similarly when they ask for other helps that they thought could be found at the cluster level they never got a favorable answer. The members of school committee however said they were helpless because they do not know whether they have a part to play in the cluster. They wished they were included in the cluster management so that they could ensure that their school also benefit from the cluster.

It is clear, from the above discussion that members of the local communities are not adequately aware about important education policies. The communities' lack of adequate knowledge about policies affects their participation in the implementation of such

policies as they do not know what their role is. Thorough communication to all stakeholders about the policy is important (Hadaad and Demisky, 1995). It should however be mentioned that communication alone is not enough but the stakeholders must also be adequately empowered to carry out their responsibilities. This study found that the communication about the CDSS policy to local communities was poor. Worse still, members of the local communities in the CDSSs were never empowered let alone sensitized about their roles in the school.

4.4 Participation of members of the local communities in the management of CDSSs

The third question, which the study attempted to answer, was how the members of the local communities were actually participating in the running of CDSSs. The main purpose for this question was to find out the real situation on the ground regarding community participation in CDSSs. The main issues investigated in this case included; who the main participants were, and how they were participating in issues such as infrastructure development, teaching and learning process and other issues.

4.4.1 Participants in the CDSSs

It was found in this study that the majority of people from the local community who were participating in the CDSS issues were parents and guardians of students who were currently enrolled in the schools. In some cases political leaders, village headmen and chiefs in whose area the CDSS is located were also involved in some ways. According to some parents the politicians mainly get involved in the issues of the school to attract voters during elections. To substantiate this claim parents at one of the CDSSs said that

their school was initiated by the then aspiring Member of Parliament in conjunction with some leaders of the community especially village headmen and he used to visit the school and support it financially but when he was elected as Member of Parliament, he never visited it until the time of general elections. He however was never re-elected and his interest in the school ceased. In the CDSSs where this study was conducted, it was observed that the responsibility for community participation in the management of the schools was left in the hands of parents and guardians who have children in the schools. This situation can compromise the sustainability of projects as some parents may not focus on long-term projects of the school when they know that their children who are in their final year at the school may not benefit from them.

Some members of school committees said that it was difficult to persuade the ordinary members of the community to be involved in the school because people in the area were not sure as to whether their children will be selected to the schools since selection was not done at the local schools. They claimed that some parents had been disappointed with the way students were being enrolled at their school because their wards were forced to go to private schools despite the school having a lot of vacant spaces in its classes. Indeed, as Chakwera (2005) observed, the difficulty which members of the local community experience when enrolling their wards in the schools may have made some members of the local communities to reduce their support to the schools. One parent even lamented that some people in the community who helped to establish the school and invested a lot of their energy to it were never appreciated or recognized. Worse still, their wards were sometimes not selected into the schools despite being qualified for secondary

education. “Some members had to give up their gardens (land) here to enable the CDSSs to be constructed in this area yet their wards are never selected into the school”, he claimed. The problem of student selection into the CDSSs was also highlighted by Macjessie-Mbewe (2004b) who also claimed that this was one of the reasons why the community had become less enthusiastic in getting itself involved in development work in the CDSSs.

4.4.2 Main modes of participation

An attempt was made to find out the main modes of community participation in the ten CDSSs. The modes of participation were further analyzed and classified along the participation continuum presented by UNICEF (1986) as quoted by Schaefer (1994). The results of this analysis are presented in the following table.

NAME OF CDSS	MAJOR MODE OF PARTICIPATION	LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION EXISTING
F	Money and material contributions for purchasing Desks and building a hall.	2
	Supervising development projects (through PTA committee).	3
	Resolution of disciplinary cases mostly involving students.	3
G	Money and material contribution for construction of a brick fence.	2
	Supervising development projects (through PTA committee).	2
	Looking after a boarding facility.	4
	Monitoring teacher and pupil of absenteeism.	4
H	Contribution of money for construction of a house.	2
	Looking after a boarding facility.	3
L	Provision of labor for road construction.	2
	Money contributions for construction of a house.	2
M	Money contributions for construction of a laboratory.	3
	Looking after a boarding facility.	4
N	Money contributions for construction of a laboratory.	2
	Participating in extra-curricular activities of the school as guest speakers	3
P	Contribution of labor for molding bricks.	2
	Money contributions for construction of a hall.	2
	Resolution of disciplinary cases (mostly involving students).	3
Q	Money contributions for construction of classrooms.	2
	Resolution of disciplinary cases (mostly involving students).	3
R	Money contributions for construction of classrooms.	2
S	Money contributions for construction of a laboratory.	2
	Resolution of disciplinary cases (mostly involving students).	3

Table 4: Main modes of community participation in the CDSSs

It should be noted that in order to determine the level of participation, an enquiry was made into the schools to find out what activities were communities involved in and how were they involved in such activities. According to the UNICEF (1986) scale (degree) of participation as quoted by Schaeffer (1994), the lower the level the less the communities' involvement in decision making and ownership of the activities. Similarly, Bray (2000), and Rose (2003a) state that, the lower the level the more 'pseudo' the community participation becomes and the higher the level the more 'genuine' is the participation. In this study, the participation analysis comprised of levels from 1 (the lowest level) to 7 (the highest level).

Generally, as table 4 shows, the type of community participation prevailing in the CDSSs is less 'genuine'. It clearly indicates that the communities largely participate by contributing labor and money to the schools, a situation Rose (2003a) describes as extraction. According to most parents who were interviewed in the schools, local communities, particularly parents themselves were not participating in real decision-making at every stage in the projects (i.e. identification of problems, the study of feasibility, planning, implementation and evaluation). In most cases they were merely told what to do by school administrators. These findings are similar to what Chimombo and Kadzamira (2001) found at primary school level. However, this study has found that the participants in the CDSSs are mostly parents and guardians whose children are currently enrolled in the schools and they participate largely by paying school fees in the form of development fund that is used by the SMC or PTA to undertake the projects.

When asked what the school committee was doing towards monitoring of teachers' performance as required by the Education Act, one chairperson of the SMC at one of the CDSSs said that they were not adequately monitoring teacher's performance because their committee was made up of people who were not competent with the teaching profession. He however added that sometimes, when students complain about lack of adequate teaching by a particular teacher(s), they come in and advise the teacher(s) concerned usually through the head teacher. The chairperson was however quick to admit that most teachers try to find excuses for their actions. For example, he said that at one time a teacher who was a habitual drunkard was approached by the school committee after getting complaints from students that the teacher was getting drunk at a time when he was supposed to be working at the school. The teacher however argued that he always made sure that he goes for drinking after teaching his lessons. As people who are not adequately competent with the rules of the teaching profession they simply accepted his argument especially considering the fact that the head teacher also appeared to be condoning the behavior of teachers leaving their duty station before 5pm which is the normal knocking off time for civil servants in Malawi..

Learning of science is one of the big challenges students in CDSSs encounter. Apart from the fact that adequately qualified teachers are rare in these schools, teaching and learning materials especially for science subjects are scarce. Members of the local communities in all the ten CDSSs admitted that lack of Mathematics and Physical Science on the certificates of graduates of CDSSs was one of the important contributing factors to their lack of competitiveness when they attend interviews together with their

colleagues from CSSs. In one of the general PTA meeting, which I attended, parents brainstormed ways of ensuring that their wards learn Mathematics and Sciences just as were other students in the CSSs. Some of the challenges of Science Education in these schools that were noted were lack of laboratories, insufficient books for sciences, lack of materials and instruments for science and lack of adequately qualified science teachers. The parents then agreed to establish a science fund, which would be managed by teachers and supervised by the executive committee of the PTA. To ensure that each parent who had a ward at the school contributes to this fund it was agreed that the fund would be paid as part of the school fees. This fund was to be used for purchasing immediate needs in science department such as simple apparatus and materials. The school development fund, which was used in infrastructure development and maintenance, was to continue being paid as part of the fees as well. The way the parents agreed to contribute to the science fund revealed that they were eager to sacrifice their resources in order to improve the education of their wards.

Although boarding services were phased out in these schools both parents and students felt that boarding facilities were very helpful. In some CDSSs, parents had started offering boarding facilities to some students although this was at a smaller scale. At one of the schools, the PTA chairperson said that they started by offering self-boarding facility to some few girls who were commuting from very long distances. After observing that all the girls in the boarding passed their national exams, many parents started pressing to have their wards in the boarding as well but the house which was being used as a dormitory was too small such that it could not accommodate them all. In this respect

some parents expressed their unhappiness that the decision to abolish school boarding services in CDSSs was made without consulting them and they wondered why the Ministry of Education had to abolish these services as if the government was funding them. A former student from a DEC concurred with these sentiments and claimed that the presence of boarding facilities at his former school helped him to pass the MSCE exams very well and got selected to the University of Malawi where he successfully completed his studies. A member of the local community at one of the schools bemoaned the phasing out of boarding services at the CDSS and said that the boarding also helped ordinary people in the area because most people in the area were able to sell their products such as bananas, cassava, maize, rice, meat etc at the school.

The findings of this study indicate that there were very little consultations, if any at all, with members of local communities when the government was formulating the policy of converting DECs into CDSSs. From the views of members of the local communities above it is clear that their desires were not taken into account when the new policy was made. Kadzamira and Rose (2001) and Chimombo and Chonzi (2000) observed that the policy formulation process in Malawi lacks a tradition of adequate inclusive participation by stakeholders. This adversely affects the implementation of the policies so formed as community ownership of the policies become problematic. The fact that some communities have resorted to reintroduce boarding services at their school without approval of the ministry authorities indicates that implementation of the policy is problematic

Communication is another problem that affects how well the stakeholders embrace the new policy. Commenting on the structure of policy communication in Malawi and

Namibia, Wolf et.al. (1999:57) said, “in both countries, communication generally flows from the center out (or from the top down). While communications should travel in both directions, in practice relatively little information from communities and schools makes its way back through the system.” The findings of this study reveal that there was a problem with the top down formulation of policy.

4.4.3 School Infrastructures

A closer observation into the schools revealed that they had generally poor and inadequate infrastructure. The following table shows some of the key infrastructures and resources available in the schools. A tick (✓) indicates that the item was available.

ITEM	COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL									
	F	G	H	L	M	N	P	Q	R	S
Science laboratory	✓				✓					
Multipurpose hall					✓					✓
Football pitch	✓	✓								✓
Netball pitch	✓	✓			✓					✓
Bore-hole or piped water system					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
School garden					✓					
Store-room	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Staff-room	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓
Duplicating machine	✓	✓				✓	✓			
Sports kit	✓				✓	✓				
Tuck shop										
Typewriter	✓				✓		✓			✓
Computer(s)		✓			✓					
Head teacher's office	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓
Desks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chairs (for student assembly function)		✓								✓
Working tables (for teachers)	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓
Library	✓				✓	✓				
Students- Toilets (or pit latrines) ratio	56	66	80	77	72	61	74	-	-	70

Table 5: Key infrastructures and resources available in the schools

As the table shows, it was not surprising that parents, teachers and students were very much concerned about the condition of their schools and wished solutions were found quickly so that the students could learn under comfortable conditions. Both parents and

teachers however, said that they were doing their best to improve the situation. Nevertheless, they blamed the government for not doing enough to improve education in these schools. The following table shows some of the major projects members of the local communities at various CDSSs were doing and planning to do at the time of the study.

CDSS	TYPE OF PROJECT UNDERWAY	NEXT PROJECT PLANNED
F	Construction of teacher's house	Purchasing of desks and building of multipurpose hall
G	Construction of a brick fence around the school	Construction of a multipurpose hall and a hostel
H	Construction of a teacher's house and wiring of classrooms	Not yet decided
L	Construction and maintenance of a road leading to the school	Construction of a teachers house
S	Construction of a teacher's house	Construction of science laboratory
M	No project yet	Construction of laboratory
N	No project yet	Construction of a laboratory
P	Molding of bricks	Construction of a multipurpose hall
Q	Construction of classroom block	Not yet decided
R	Construction of a classroom block	Not yet decided

Table 6 Main projects currently underway and those planned to start in the various CDSSs

Indeed, in most of the ten schools, there were school projects of one kind or the other taking place. Members of the local community, particularly parents and guardians whose children were studying at the schools, were carrying out the projects. Actually the parents

and guardians were mostly not physically working on the projects themselves but they were contributing money that was used for buying materials used in the projects as well as paying the people who were working on the projects. It should also be mentioned here that school committees in the form of SMC or PTA were carrying out supervisory work on the projects although not many members of the committees were making themselves available for this task. In most cases it was the chairperson who was making himself or herself readily available at the school.

4.4.4 Implementation of school curriculum

Most of the parents that were interviewed indicated that they did not take part in school curriculum issues. However some said that they were partially aware of some of the subjects, which were taught in the schools. They also said that although they were satisfied with the types of subjects that were being taught in their schools they would still want some practical subjects whose knowledge the students could use in their everyday life such as woodwork and metalwork. They suggested that metalwork and woodwork could be taken as extra curricula subjects, which could be handled by some competent people from the local community. This concurs with what Macjessie-Mbewe (2004b) found in Malawi where local craftsmen expressed willingness to teach primary school students their skills. To make the graduates of these schools competitive on the job market, the parents also said that Mathematics and Physical Science are two of the most important subjects, which they would wish their children were learning thoroughly hence they would welcome any effort that is aimed at improving the teaching and learning of these subjects in their schools.

In terms of the local communities' participation in curriculum issues the head teachers in all the CDSSs admitted that currently their participation was very minimal and focused mainly in the area of extra-curriculum activities such as coaching football and netball teams, teaching about human rights, health, spiritual and other issues. This involvement was mainly arranged by the school staff and usually without the attention of SMC or PTA committees. According to some parents there was still room for improvement in this area where members of the local communities could be involved to handle not only extra-curricular activities but also some supporting functions at the schools such as typing, book keeping and library supervision. Some people mentioned that some members of the local community could handle some topics in the core curriculum. The general consensus amongst the stakeholders in the CDSSs that were visited in this study was however that competent people who can handle these subjects and issues are already available in the communities and some were already members of the school committees.

In terms of extra-curriculum, the head teachers in most CDSSs concurred and said that involving members of the local community in extra-curricula activities, which are deemed beneficial to both the school and the community, is possible and may indeed, enhance community ownership of the school. However they observed that to involve them in the school's core curriculum might be difficult mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the remuneration package, which the school committees may offer, may not attract people who are competent enough to prepare the students for national examinations and secondly teachers may feel that their jobs and competence are threatened by the

competent members of the local communities. Furthermore the arrangement may create tension between teachers and members of the local community but also between teachers and students especially when the later show that they enjoy more the lessons delivered by the members of the local community. This tension may result in the reduction of teachers' morale thereby reducing their performance as well. For example, teachers at the school may feel embarrassed when the teachers employed by the school committee end up performing better. On the other hand the teachers employed from the community by the committees may feel being looked down by their colleagues from the Ministry of Education thereby rendering their efforts less effective. The cordial relationship between the school and the community that is necessary for effective learning (Bisika, 1994) would therefore be threatened. By considering and learning from the way Village-based Community Primary Schools in Mangochi operated, these fears may be eliminated. An evaluation of these schools by Hyde et.al (1997) in terms of student achievement, community and parental involvement and teacher effectiveness found that these schools were performing much better than government primary schools in the same area. The key factors contributing to this high performance were: modified curriculum that leads to more time being spent on core subjects; regular supervision that maintains standards and motivates teachers; smaller class sizes; and participatory methods.

According to the parents who were interviewed, there are already many people in the community who are qualified to teach at CDSSs, some of whom are even better qualified than the teachers who are currently teaching in these schools. "There are many retired primary and secondary school teachers in the community. In fact, after all, most of the

teachers in the CDSSs are primary school teachers hence there should be no problem in finding enough teachers in the community to supplement the staff already existing in these schools.” one of the parent commented. Apart from the teaching staff, which as already said is in short supply, the schools also need support staff such as copy typists, bookkeepers and librarians to help the schools with other operations that are currently handled by the same few teachers that are available in these schools. In all the schools visited except two, there is literally no support staff apart from watchmen who are employed to secure the school property particularly during the night. The head teacher and his or her deputy apart from teaching are also responsible for collection, paying out and safe keeping of the school finances, a situation which leaves them more vulnerable to financial misappropriation and mismanagement especially considering that most were never trained to handle institutional finances. Some parents observed that it is very possible for some of the responsibilities, which were handled by teachers to be taken care of by support staff or volunteers from the community. “As a matter of fact teachers are never adequately trained to handle finances but there are some people in the community who have appropriate training, skills and experience in how to handle finances”, observed one parent. From this discussion, it is clear that CDSSs are not responding to community needs. One then wonders what is meant by the name community in these schools.

4.4.5 Participation in resolving student disciplinary cases

Parents in all the schools visited agreed that they were involved in disciplinary cases involving their wards in the schools especially when the disciplinary issue is serious enough. Examples of disciplinary issues, which involve parents in their resolution, are:

drunkenness, pregnancy, truancy, stealing, teasing and bullying. Most head teachers however said that some of the commonest cases that involve parents in their resolution are: drunkenness, immoral sexual relationships between boys and girls and absenteeism.

In the interviews with students, most of them said that they were not satisfied with the way disciplinary cases involving them were handled. They pointed out that in most cases; teachers were not allowing them to explain their side of the story so that the parents and indeed members of the disciplinary committee, which in most cases comprises of members of the school committee, may have a fair assessment and participation in the passing of the judgment. “Teachers simply invite the parents to announce the punishment, which they, on their own have already resolved,” one of the girls, lamented. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, Section 43 (a) reads, “Every person shall have the right to lawful and procedurally fair administrative action which is justifiable in relation to reasons given where his or her rights, freedoms legitimate expectations or interests are affected or threatened.” In addition, Section 25 (1) of the same constitution states that “All persons are entitled to education.” Since education is a human right, it is proper that the process of resolving students’ disciplinary cases should always satisfy the two principle rules of natural justice: Firstly that the person whose interests will be affected by the decision should be given a hearing before that decision is made, and secondly that the decision maker must be unbiased.

Some parents agreed that they indeed do not genuinely participate in the resolution of their children’s disciplinary issues. However, they admitted that this was partly because

they do not adequately know the school rules hence in most cases they mostly depend on the teachers themselves to advise them what to do about the issue at hand. One parent commented, “We get to know some of the school rules when our wards have already broken them.” This implies that some parents may not be happy with some of the resolutions reached during disciplinary hearings. As Wallat and Goldman (1979) observed, schools sometimes seem to resemble a football field where teachers and parents play against one another while the ball (or the child) is thrown back and forth, with both sides fighting for control and after the play has been called, each side argues with the referee (or the principal) to step in and recall the play in their favor.

The students complained that sometimes teachers punish them for offenses, which they themselves commit. For example one student said, “teachers suspend us from school for two weeks or more when we shave our heads the ‘mbonga’ style (shaving the head clean without leaving any hair) but we also have some teachers here who also shave their heads in the same style but are allowed to teach in classes. We wonder why the ‘mbonga’ style of shaving is only bad for students and not for teachers.” The students said that they had been reporting the issue of ‘mbonga’ to their parents to take it up with the school committee but nothing had so far happened. Some parents who were also members of school committees admitted that there were indeed some issues which some concerned parents had forwarded them to discuss at their meeting but had never been discussed. The parents said that one of the reasons why some of the issues parents forward to them to discuss at their committee meetings were never discussed was that the agenda for the meetings were usually prepared by the head teacher hence only issues that the head

teacher felt were important were the ones that were discussed. One would expect the head teacher to make thorough consultation with members of the committee, at least the chairman but as one parent observed, “The head teachers themselves need to be trained on how they can involve the community even when coming up with the agenda for a meeting.”

4.4.6 Community participation in Church owned CDSSs

Church or missionary groups also established a significant number of CDSSs just like Grant-aided Conventional Secondary Schools in Malawi. Two of the schools I visited belonged to this category and I was particularly interested in finding out whether the presences of church proprietors affect community participation at the school. In terms of management of these schools it was observed that the proprietors require that the chairperson of the PTA or SMC and the head teacher be members of their church. Just like in Conventional Grant-aided Secondary Schools, as the proprietor, the church is also allocated some spaces in the school to be filled by students from the church who are selected by the church after administering its special examinations.

According to members of school committees I interacted with, the Church proprietors do not interfere with the way the community participates in the management of the school. “The church, in fact encourages us to participate in improving the education of our children at this school”, commented one parent. As members of SMC and PTA they said that they were free to decide the type of development activities they would like to embark on at the school. However, they said that the head teacher and the school committee

chairman still have to report to the proprietors (church authorities) to let them know what was happening at the school. “In fact although the church authorities have already allocated the whole of this area for this school the actual location of any new building we may wish to construct here has to be endorsed by them,” commented the chairperson of PTA at one of the CDSSs. An observation into the type of development projects taking place in these schools and the way members of the local community were participating in them indicated that there was no difference with the way similar projects are handled in the public CDSSs.

Although there was no difference in the way local communities were participating in development projects in Church owned CDSSs and other public CDSSs the study found that a significant difference existed when handling disciplinary issues. The head teachers of these schools said that the proprietors take a keen interest in disciplinary issues of the schools hence some of the rules that are followed at the schools were actually prepared by the proprietors. For example they said that any teacher who is found indulging in extra-marital affairs risks being forced to transfer to other schools when the church authorities know about it. Some students said that some religious proprietors, despite knowing that their school caters for students from different religious background, restrict freedom of worship or forming other youth clubs. However, when it comes to community support to their schools they expect every parent that has a child in the schools to participate equally and faithfully. This practice, which some religious proprietors of CDSSs are allegedly promoting, can negatively affect community participation in their schools, as some members of the community may feel not part of the school. According

to Section 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, “Every person has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, belief and thought, and to academic freedom.” It is therefore important that apart from sensitizing the school committees and school staff, proprietors also need to be sensitized about their roles.

4.4.7 Financial Burden

It was observed that students in CDSSs pay considerably higher fees than their counterparts in the CSSs. The students complained that the amount of fees that they pay does not correspond fairly to the status of their school infrastructures let alone the amount of learning taking place in these schools. They claimed that the tuition fees for CDSSs are the same as that of the CSSs. Indeed according to MoEST (1999) all CDSSs students were to be paying the same amount of tuition fees and text book revolving fund as all other students in CSSs. The students complained that the fees were made to be equal with that being paid by their counterparts in CSSs despite the fact that most CDSSs do not have water, electricity, etc. and even their school infrastructure is poorer than that of the CSSs. Worse still most CDSSs do not receive government subvention as is the case with CSSs. The students wondered why they were treated the same as those in the CSSs only when it comes to payment and amount of fees while the teaching and learning resources are allocated to them in quite unequal manner and in favor of CSS students.

The parents also expressed similar sentiments and said that while most CSSs are in cities and other urban areas where transport to the schools is easier, cheaper and faster the situation is different in most CDSSs which are largely located in rural areas. This

situation means that parents who have wards in CDSSs pay more in terms of the indirect costs of education as well (Rose, 2002). All head teachers who were interviewed in this study said that they wished the tuition money which was collected at the school were used at the same school to boost the development fund. This wish seems to make some sense in light of what Chakwera (2005) observed that the total development fund collected by CDSSs was actually smaller because many students in these schools transfer to CSSs and private schools thereby leaving a smaller population of students in the CDSSs and this consequently reduces the development fund collected.

4.4.8 Monitoring Financial Transactions at the School

Some members of school committees said that although they were informed of some financial transactions taking place at the school they wished they were taking a greater role in monitoring these transactions. In all the CDSSs that were visited during this study, it was found that school committees are only involved in transacting the development fund. It was however also found that the development fund is only one of several categories of funds that are transacted in these schools. Some of the finances that are handled in most of these schools which are collected from students and the community include: tuition fees, textbook revolving fund, general purposes fund, grounds fees (collected from people who hire school property such as chairs for private functions) and sports fund. Some parents however admitted that even if they were given the opportunity to monitor and control all the financial transactions at the schools they would still find it difficult because at the moment their committees were not competent enough to handle this task. They lamented that the situation is like this because people rarely consider the

skills of the persons nominated when electing members of school committees. Ironically when asked whether academic qualification of a person should be considered when nominating office bearers in school committees most parents said that what matters is character and not educational qualification while teachers said that committee members in these schools should have at least a minimum of Malawi Schools Certificate of Education (MSCE).

Most head teachers who were interviewed in this study agreed that some positions in school committees require people who are properly qualified for certain skills. They admitted that most head teachers are unable to prepare a good cashbook hence the presence in the school committees of members who know financial accounting would help them very much. In all the schools where the study was conducted, it was found that head teachers handle most of the school finances alone except development fund, which is managed by the PTA executive committee. However, the head teacher is also responsible for banking this money as well. The situation is like this because the schools do not have accounts personnel let alone office assistants. One head teacher said, “we are just living by the grace of God, otherwise it is very risky to head these schools. The sad thing is that when problems arise concerning the school finances the government quickly blames and prosecutes us”.

The presence of inadequately competent school committees has potential of encouraging financial mismanagement by head teachers in these schools. Some teachers in these schools complained that their head teachers do not handle school finances transparently

enough because they take advantage of the incompetent and inactive school committees. They claimed that their head teachers do not take time to brief or explain to them as members of staff about how school finances are used at the school pretending that they are accountable to the school committees while in the presence of school committees they also pretend that their members of staff are aware of what was happening at their schools.

4.5 The Impact of Community Participation in CDSSs

The last question which the study attempted to answer was to find out what impact community participation was making in the CDSSs. In order to answer this question, a closer look at the actual situation on the ground in these schools was made. Among other things, issues of student enrolment, school staffing, subjects being offered and school infrastructure were covered.

4.5.1 Student Enrolment

Generally, all the CDSSs where the study was conducted were greatly under enrolled according to their recommended capacities. The following table summarizes the student enrolment situation in these schools at the time the study was conducted.

LOCATION	CDSS	RECOMMENDED SCHOOL CAPACITY			ACTUAL STUDENT ENROLMENT		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Rural	F	200	200	400	176	160	336
	H	200	200	400	140	50	190
	L	100	100	200	95	59	154
	S	125	125	250	159	92	251
Semi-Urban	G	140	140	280	153	104	257
	M	300	300	600	271	232	503
Urban	N	200	200	400	179	129	308
	P	200	200	400	189	106	295
	Q	100	100	200	80	75	155
	R	100	100	200	81	94	175
Grand Total		1665	1665	3330	1522	1077	2599

Table 5: School capacities and actual student enrolments in the CDSSs

As Table 5 shows, out of the total school capacity of 3330 students for the ten CDSSs, only 2599 students were actually enrolled in the schools, representing 78% enrolment. The situation was worse in rural schools than in urban schools. For example, in rural schools, a total of 1163 students were found against the school enrolment capacity of 1530 indicating an enrolment percentage of 76.01% while in the urban schools, a total of 1436 students were found against the school enrolment capacity of 1800 indicating an enrolment percentage of 79.78%. It should be born in mind that during selection to form one the government makes sure that all places in the schools are filled up and that 50% of the students selected are girls (MoEST, 1999). Chakwera (2005) similarly found that the

enrolments in CDSSs were lower than their recommended capacities unlike during the DEC era when these schools had much more students than their capacities. According to Chakwera, one of the major reasons for the low enrolment was parents' dissatisfaction with the quality of education taking place in these schools. However, most parents who were interviewed in this study said that they were generally satisfied with the education that was taking place in these schools despite the existence of some challenges. They claimed that the quality of education in these schools was much better than during the DEC era. A parent at one of the CDSSs said, "our school performs better than the CSS nearby, in fact last year three students were selected to the University of Malawi while our neighboring CSS did not send any student to the university." This finding appears to contradict the perception of most scholars about the quality of education in CDSSs. However, it should not be surprising since quality is a complex term which is difficult to define. While it is easy to accept that the quality of education in some CDSSs is better now than when the schools were DEC, it is difficult to appreciate that it is satisfactory enough. Perhaps, the lack of knowledge about some elements in the policy, particularly that the CDSSs were to be at par with CSSs makes some communities to be satisfied with the education taking place in these schools.

Some teachers put the blame about the low enrolment in the CDSSs on the Educational Division Officials who despite knowing that the CSSs were full, still accepted to transfer students from CDSSs to CSSs. They claimed that in the past, when Educational Headquarters was handling transfers, it was very rare for a student from a DEC to transfer to a CSS. "In those days a student from a DEC could only transfer to a CSS when there

was a vacancy at the CSS and the transfer was only done on merit usually after Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) results were released. However, these days even dull students from CDSSs find their way to National Secondary Schools”, lamented one head teacher who was also a teacher-in-charge at one of the DEC’s during the DEC era.

Although the government policy on selection into these schools is at 50:50 for both boys and girls, only a total of 1077 girls were found in the ten schools against a total of 1522 boys indicating that the girls made up only 41.44% of the total enrolment in these schools. Clearly, girls are more underrepresented in these schools and reasons for this situation are beyond mere transferring of students to other schools. One of the contributing factors to this situation is the higher drop out rate for the girls than boys in these schools. According to Education Management Information System (EMIS) (2005), in Malawi, more girls drop out of schools than boys. Apart from lack of tuition fees, the major reasons cited for more girls to drop out of school are pregnancy, marriage and lack of interest in school. Obviously, most of these reasons could be addressed better by proper community involvement in the management of the schools. However, as already pointed out, the lack of community sensitization seems to be the main factor as members of the local community do not know what is expected of them.

The enrolment and gender disparity situation in the schools was generally worse in rural CDSSs than in urban CDSSs. A total of 441 girls were enrolled in rural schools against the total enrolment of 1163, indicating an enrolment percentage of 37.91%. On the other hand, a total of 636 girls were found in urban schools against the total enrolment of 1436,

indicating 44.28%. It should be born in mind that according to MoEST (2002:5), one of the six Education For All (EFA) goals was, “to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by the year 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015...” The findings of this study however concur with EMIS (2005), which indicated that the girls’ enrolment in secondary schools in Malawi was still much lower than that of boys. This means that Malawi missed the target of 2005 as the year by which gender disparities in secondary education would be eliminated. It should therefore be important to find out the reasons why the target was not met. It should also be remembered that in Malawi CDSSs enroll the greater proportion of secondary school students than CSSs (EMIS, 2005) therefore one of the key strategies to achieve gender parity in secondary education may be by promoting genuine community participation in CDSSs

Some parents and teachers said that another reason why some students leave CDSSs and thereby creating vacancies in these schools is the high cost a student incurs when pursuing education in these schools. In terms of fees, they said that every student in the CDSSs paid the same amount of tuition fees as their counterparts in CSSs, despite their schools being of inferior quality and quantity in terms of resources and infrastructures. Furthermore, as day scholars, students spend a lot of money for transport, food and sometimes accommodation. The stakeholders admitted that meaningful community participation could indeed play a significant role to reduce some of these problems.

In terms of girl education, studies have revealed that many poor families in Malawi prefer educating boys rather than girls (Chimombo and Chonzi, 2001; Kadzamira and Rose,

2002). It is therefore not surprising to find that many girls who are selected into these schools fail to report for studies and many of those who report end up dropping out as evidenced in this study. The parents and community leaders need to do more in promoting education of girls. Although the schools were meant to cater for the educational needs of the surrounding community within a radius of not more than 5km, this study found that some of the students come from distances of over 20km. Most parents expressed their sadness about the problem of distance. One parent said that it was saddening that the boarding facilities at the school her daughter was studying were closed down when the school was converted into a CDSS. According to her, “boarding facilities help to keep the children, particularly girls, in school”. From my interaction with students in both rural and urban CDSSs during this study, I found that generally, many students in rural CDSSs walk longer distances to schools. This probably explains partially why there are fewer students remaining in rural CDSSs than in urban CDSSs.

Girls experience more problems than boys in as far as the distance from their homes to schools are concerned. During an FGD with students at one of the CDSSs, it transpired that apart from the fact that students who come from distant places often come to school on empty stomach and therefore weak and tired due to the long journey, girls also suffer from other problems. One girl said “some boys keep on pestering the girls for sexual relationships on their way home thereby delaying them on the way as the boys keep on blocking their way and threatening them. When the girl eventually reaches home and narrates her ordeal, she also ends up meeting the wrath of the parents who do not believe her explanation.”

This study has also found that in order to avoid traveling long distances from home to school, a significant number of students engage in self-boarding, where they rent a room or building in the nearby neighborhood from where they operate. This situation, according to the stakeholders has in most cases become worrisome because it promotes immorality amongst the youth, especially the girls as they try to look for money to help them meet their needs and desires. The girls end up establishing sexual relationships with ‘sugar daddies’ and other boys in the area who support them financially. Boys also end up indulging themselves in drug abuse and thefts or robberies thereby ruining their future. Surely, the policy change, particularly the abolition of boarding facilities in CDSSs where the community and the school administration were in most cases successfully running them appear to be undesirable as the change might have contributed to a high prevalence of HIV and AIDS among the youth of Malawi apart from increasing the dropout rate for students in these schools. It is not surprising therefore that according to EMIS (2005), apart from lack of finances; one of the main reasons why students, particularly girls, drop out of school was pregnancy. One parent observed that while some parents were taking initiatives to counsel their wards, the other stakeholders such as NGOs, Ministry of Education officials etc, need to take initiatives as well. He suggested that the school committee in consultation with teachers at the school should set up a good monitoring team to control the activities of students who are on self boarding. Most parents however wished boarding facilities were restored at the schools so that their children were looked after by teachers, otherwise self-boarding which is so common near these schools is not

only more expensive but is also more risky than the boarding facilities which were available during the DEC era.

4.5.2 School Staffing

An observation into the staffing situation revealed that in general, the schools are severely understaffed. The following table shows the staffing situation in the CDSSs where the study was conducted.

LOCATION	CDSS	Number of teachers			No. Of qualified secondary school teachers	Number of Subjects offered
		Male	Female	Total		
Rural	F	6	1	7	0	10
	H	7	1	8	1	13
	L	8	0	8	1	10
	S	8	1	9	0	9
Semi-Urban	G	6	3	9	3	10
	M	11	5	16	10	11
Urban	N	8	8	16	2	14
	P	9	0	9	7	11
	Q	9	3	12	2	10
	R	10	5	15	6	10

Table 6: Numbers of teachers and their qualifications in the CDSSs

The table shows that on average each school has eight classes (two classes for each form) and ten teachers who teach about twelve subjects at the school. Furthermore only 29% of the teachers in the schools are qualified to teach at secondary school level (32

teachers out of the total of 109 teachers are qualified to teach at the secondary school level. The rest are qualified to teach at primary school). These results mean that a teacher at the school is expected to teach continuously from the beginning of classes (lessons) until the students knock off. It also means that when a teacher is absent from school even for legitimate reason(s), many periods of lessons are left unattended to. It is more likely therefore that students in these schools are often left alone in the classroom or outside the classroom chatting, reading or playing as their teacher rests for the next lesson or is engaged in some business elsewhere. Many students were actually found loitering at the schools when they were supposed to be in their classrooms learning during the data collection period of this study.

The staffing problem is worse in rural areas than in urban as apart from the rural CDSSs having fewer teachers than their urban counterparts; female teachers were greatly underrepresented in rural CDSSs. As can be observed from the table, three of the four rural CDSSs had only one female teacher while the remaining CDSS did not even have any female teacher. This situation is indeed worrisome for girls in the rural CDSSs as they need them not only to inspire them as role models but also to act as mothers to whom they can feel free to confide in and talk to in order to solve their problems. Wolf (1999) found that in Malawi, particularly in rural areas, many girls do not have adequate interest in education and one of the reasons for this sad situation was the lack of role models in their local areas.

Some parents expressed worry that their wards are never given assignments often enough and even when given, the assignments are usually never marked. This situation, they claimed, leads to their wards not performing well during national examinations. One can however understand why the teachers are unable to give assignments or homework to the students often enough. Teachers are overwhelmed with too much work at the school so that extra time for marking assignments is rarely available. Indeed, most students and parents who were interviewed expressed their sympathy for the teachers and said that the teachers were actually trying their best. However, apart from appealing to the Ministry of Education authorities for additional staff in the schools through their SMCs, the parents admitted that so far, they have not yet found an alternative strategy to solve this problem of staff shortage.

Apart from the schools having insufficient numbers of teachers, all of them did not have support staff such as copy typist, accounts assistant, messenger except few watchmen. This means that the few teachers at the school also do the work of support staff. For example, during data collection for this study it was observed that at every CDSS that was visited, some teachers were busy collecting examination fees from students such that the classes they were supposed to be attending at that time were being neglected. In some of the schools, I had to visit them several times because head teachers could not be found as they were busy transacting some businesses for the school outside their offices. The absence of support staff in CDSSs is indeed a serious problem, which is affecting the effectiveness of these schools as the few teachers available at the school are strained further to do the work which can be done by other people.

Although most teachers in these schools are under qualified, it was learnt that the government was trying to upgrade them. At the time I was visiting the schools for data collection, I was told that some teachers from the schools, though very few were studying for diploma in education at Domasi College of Education (DCE). This means that out of the already few teachers in these schools, some were actually not available for services at the schools. The upgrading of teachers may sound like good news for these schools, however most parents and students complained that when teachers who go for upgrading graduate, they are quickly transferred to other schools, particularly conventional secondary schools. Some head teachers concurred with the parents and students and said that some teachers were indeed being transferred to other schools after graduating from the college.

While it was true that some teachers seek transfers from CDSSs to CSSs after finishing their studies (Gwede, 2005), in this study, it was observed that sometimes the transfer takes place against the teacher's wish. At one rural school, I met a teacher who had finished his studies at Domasi College of Education the previous year and had built his house near the school. He revealed that he was being pressurized by Ministry of Education authorities to transfer to a different school despite his explanation to them that he was comfortable remaining at the same rural school from where he had found the opportunity for further studies. "Actually I am being asked to go to one of the two schools, in this same educational division; one a conventional secondary school and the other one is a CDSS. Surprisingly both of them are in urban areas where the teaching staff situation is better than at this school. Furthermore, there is no indication that another

teacher will come to take my place when I leave”, he lamented. The students and their parents from the school, which had endured deprivation of the teacher’s service during the time he was on study leave, described the way the education officials were treating them as unfair and cruel.

Although the CDSS policy and PIF highlight the importance of school committees and Ministry of Education officials working as partners at the school, some members of school committees complained that some education officials do not respect their views on some important issues. At the school where the teacher was under pressure to transfer to another school, members of the school committee said that even if they were to meet the Educational Division officials to request them not to transfer the teacher, they were convinced that their request would not be accepted. To justify their position, they claimed that there were times when they requested for some resources for their school but often the answers they got were that the resources would be given when available. What surprised them more was that sometimes they could discover that their neighboring schools had received the resources. Worse still, no explanation was given to them as to why their school was not receiving the resources when others were receiving them. It appears from this study that some important members of the local communities have lost their trust in some Ministry of Education officials. Communication and explanation of decision(s) made about education to all stakeholders is very important in order to build trust amongst them.

4.5.3 The Role of Community Participation in Addressing Staffing Problem in the Schools

Some head teachers who were interviewed during this study said that there are mainly two reasons why there were very few female teachers in the rural areas; firstly, most female teachers are married and they stay with their husbands, most of whom work in urban areas. Secondly, most CDSSs have insufficient staff houses hence members of staff rent houses in the surrounding communities. In rural areas however, houses for rent are scarce as a result most teachers reside very far away from the schools. Female teachers therefore, find it hard to be operating from long distances to the school. Some parents from rural areas expressed sadness at the fact that female teachers are scarce in rural areas and they attributed this as one of the main reasons why more girls drop out of school. The female students themselves expressed sadness over this problem and they wished this problem was solved soon. One girl said, “sometimes we end up being punished by teachers for failing to communicate to them properly because we feel very shy to tell them the truth concerning some sensitive issues about our bodies, and even when we communicate, most times they do not understand us because they are men”. Lack of a person in the school, to whom young girls can have trust, confidence and freedom to express themselves to, can indeed make the school environment non conducive to girls’ education.

At one of the rural schools where there was no female teacher, one female student said that as girls, they sometimes found themselves in a dilemma when a need arises for them to show to the member of staff their sensitive body areas. “For example, sometimes a girl

may find that a zipper or button for her skirt is damaged such that she fails to tuck in her blouse for fear of exposing her sensitive body area. When the teacher asks why she is not tucking in the blouse the girl finds it very difficult to convince the teacher because she cannot expose her body to the male teacher to prove her point. At the end, the teacher accuses her of being rude and is consequently punished”, explained one of the head girls who was in one of the student Focus Group Discussions.

According to head teachers of all the CDSSs where the study was conducted, most of the students who fail to report for study after being selected to CDSSs are girls. One of the possible reasons for girls’ failure to report for studies at the schools can be the absence of female teachers who also act as role models for girls at school. Of course it should be understandable considering the fact that the girls selected for these schools come from the surrounding communities hence they might be already aware of the staffing situation in these schools. This explanation sounds plausible considering that according to Table: 4.1 the enrolment of girls in urban CDSSs, where there are also more female teachers is higher. This suggests that possibly more girls, who were selected to urban CDSSs, actually report for their studies. One girl conceded that the presence of female teachers at the school indeed increases the girls’ sense of security at the school. The parents from the rural CDSSs also expressed sadness at the lack of female teachers in their schools and they attributed this to one of the main reasons why there were fewer girls than boys in their schools.

When parents and members of the local community were asked as to what they were doing to solve the problem of lack of female teachers in the schools, they said that they were building teachers' houses so as to attract female teachers who may want to teach at their schools. One parent at one of the rural CDSSs however wished there was a policy at the school where teachers' houses would be divided into female teachers and male teachers to ensure gender balance at the school. This idea seems plausible because if put into practice it may ensure that more female teachers are attracted to stay and teach in these schools. As one head teacher observed, some female teachers particularly the unmarried feel very uncomfortable working at a school where there are very few female teachers.

In addition to constructing teachers' houses members of the local communities also said that through their SMCs, they keep on reminding the authorities at the Educational Division Office to send them more teachers, especially female teachers. One of the officials at the South Eastern Educational Division concurred and said that members of school committees in the division were indeed very active when it comes to reminding their office to deploy teachers to their schools. "Almost every fortnight we have representatives of school committees from various CDSSs in the division coming here to enquire about teacher deployment to their schools", the official said.

4.5.4 Subjects offered in CDSSs

Despite the shortage of staff and lack of appropriately qualified teachers the study found that the schools were actually offering most of the subjects, which are offered in CSSs.

For example, in all of the CDSSs visited, the following subjects were found to be offered: Agriculture, Bible Knowledge, Biology, Chichewa Language, English Language, Geography, History, Mathematics, Physical Science, Social Studies, Social and Development Studies. Some schools even went further and offered subjects that are treated as special subjects in CSSs; for example, Home Economics. Considering that most teachers are unqualified and that the infrastructure is generally poor, one then wonders as to what motivates the teachers to teach such subjects that require a greater degree of specialization and appropriate equipment for practicals. The answer to this puzzle was clarified at a general PTA meeting, which took place at one of the rural CDSSs which I also attended.

At this meeting, the participants observed with sadness that many of their children, who had successfully completed their secondary education, were failing to get employment hence many of them were just loitering in their villages. Furthermore, even when these school leavers attend interviews for training programs in government institutions they were rarely picked for the programs. The failure of the school leavers to get employment even after they had successfully completed secondary education was indeed observed to be one of the major factors that was discouraging students from the communities from working hard at school because they feel that education in these schools was not useful as they had been made to believe. After deliberating for some time, the parents concluded that one of the main reasons why most children who had successfully completed their secondary school education were still finding it difficult to get employed, was that they did not have good science subjects such as Biology, Physical Science and Mathematics

on their certificates. They therefore resolved to encourage the teachers to make sure that they offer these subjects although the subjects generally require some materials that are not readily available in CDSSs. On their part, the parents agreed to set up a science fund, which was to be used to purchase some needed materials for science.

Offering science subjects at a CDSS, which generally lacks science equipment for practicals is one thing and teaching the subjects effectively so as to enable students pass national examinations is also a different thing. In some of the CDSSs, it was found that the local community, particularly parents were taking a leading role in ensuring that their children learn science effectively. At one of the schools, the head teacher said that people from the surrounding area allow them to use their fields for science (Biology) practicals when needed. At another school, it was found that parents had actually already set up a science fund which was used to purchase science equipment and materials.

When asked why the number and type of subjects being offered in the school were almost identical to what was being offered in CSSs, one head teacher said that they did not want to show that their school was inferior to the other secondary schools. He argued that the superiority of a school is partly determined by the number and type of subjects it offers to its students and that is why some private schools advertise that they offer such subjects as Computer Studies to their students even when they know that their school has only one computer which normally is kept in the headmaster's office. The other reason is that since the CDSS policy promised to unify secondary education system by among other things ensuring that students enrolled into CDSSs are also selected on merit from results

of national examinations, it would be unfair for them to learn fewer subjects than their counterparts in the CSSs. The challenge however is how to bring the quality of education in these schools at par with that of the CSSs. This study has found that the members of the local communities realize that this challenge is enormous. However, they feel that the government is the one, which should take a greater role in bringing the quality of education in CDSSs at par with that of the CSSs.

4.6 The CDSS Policy Intent and its Outcome

Most parents and head teachers who were interviewed in this study indicated that the change of policy regarding Distance Education Centres was necessary as the quality of education which was taking place in these schools was unsatisfactory. Indeed one former graduate of these schools revealed that students in these schools used to be ridiculed as being dull by their counterparts in the conventional schools. The intention of the policy was therefore desirable to most of the stakeholders in the schools. Haddad and Demsky (1995) argue that the analysis of the desirability of a policy involves: the impact of the option on the stakeholders, the compatibility with the dominant ideology and targets of economic growth (articulated in national development plans) and in some cases, the impact of the option on political development and stability. This study has found that the CDSS policy was intended to ensure that all stakeholders, namely the government, parents and their children benefit as the government and members of the local communities would play their roles in lifting the standard of education in these schools. It should also be noted that at the time when the CDSS policy was introduced, the dominant ideology of the government was poverty alleviation.

This study has also found that although the government might have been convinced that it would afford to implement the policy, members of the local communities had inadequate information about the policy to enable them evaluate their contribution to the schools in the new policy. Most members of the local communities indicated that the way the CDSS policy was announced appeared like they would not contribute much to its cost. The nature and amount of resources needed to implement the policy is indeed another component that needs to be considered when deciding about the feasibility of the policy option. According to Haddad and Demsky (1995), fiscal resources, human resources, institutional culture and time are some of the factors that need to be considered when evaluating the feasibility of a policy option. This study has found that at the time DEC's were converted into CDSSs, most of these factors were inadequate. For example, the numbers of qualified teachers and learning resources were insufficient (Chakwera, 2005). Furthermore, this study has revealed that even the culture of partnership and corroboration between the government and local communities was not well developed. The feasibility of making CDSSs to be at par with CSSs was therefore a big challenge.

It can therefore be said that the CDSS policy has not yet produced its intended outcome as CDSSs are still far from being at par with CSSs. Furthermore, some problems have also emerged in these schools, for example, high attrition rates and lack of easy access to the schools by qualified students from the surrounding areas (Chakwera, 2005). Community involvement in these schools is also not different from that in the CSSs. Lack of adequate consultation with the stakeholders in the policy formulation process seems to be negatively affecting the implementation of this policy. Furthermore, lack of training

and empowerment of the key stakeholders such as head teachers and members of school committees makes their contribution less effective even if they were to be properly consulted.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion And Recommendations

Formal secondary education in Malawi is provided mainly through Conventional Secondary Schools (CSSs), Private Secondary Schools (PSSs) and Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs). CSSs and CDSSs are called public secondary schools as they are largely funded by the government. The origin of the CDSSs dates back to 1998 when they were converted from Malawi College of Distance Education Centers (MCDECs). The changing of DEC to CDSSs was made in order to improve access and quality of secondary education in Malawi by ensuring that a higher quality education was made available to the youth of Malawi. This was done after noting that the quality of education and performance of students in DEC during national examinations were poorer compared to CSSs. The ultimate aim of this change was to ensure that the CDSSs were at par with CSSs. Community participation was however one of the strategies that was employed to ensure that the ultimate aim of this policy was achieved.

This study set out to investigate the role of community participation in the management of CDSSs. It tried to find answers to four research questions as follows: What do members of the local communities understand as the meaning of CDSSs? Were members of the local communities sensitized about their roles in the schools? How are the members of the local communities participating in the running of the schools and what impact, if any, was community participation making in these schools?

Guided by a qualitative phenomenological design and using such data collection methods as focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, observations and questionnaires, the study has found that members of the local communities have different meanings of CDSSs and they were never sensitized about their roles in the management of the schools. However, members of the local communities still participate in a number of ways as they used to do during the DEC era such as contribution of labor and other resources for development projects and involvement in settling disciplinary cases. The participation of the members of the local communities is however at a lower level as they are not involved in real decision-making process in the day-to-day management of the schools. Furthermore, the local school committees such as SMCs and PTAs are not active. The literature in this study has revealed that education in schools improve when there is ‘genuine’ community participation where members of the local communities are involved in the day-to-day management of the schools. This study has therefore found that there is a contradiction between the meaning of the CDSSs in Malawi and community schools worldwide since the local communities in Malawi do not really own the schools as is the case with community schools in other countries. The effectiveness of policy is context specific. The context in which Malawi’s CDSSs found themselves in does not promote educational effectiveness and appropriate measures need to be taken by the stakeholders in order to improve the situation.

It was however noted in this study, that community participation was making some desirable impact in the schools. In some schools, various development projects and activities aimed at improving education in the schools were being carried out by members

of the local communities. However, this study has also found that the way the CDSS policy was formulated, communicated and implemented was problematic and this may be one of the main reasons why education in these schools was still lagging behind. The policy was made using top-bottom approach and without thorough consultation with the stakeholders, particularly at the local level. Furthermore, no adequate communication and training was made to the members of the local communities about their roles in the policy. This study has also noted a contradiction of the policy in that while the policy intention was to make these schools to be at par with CSSs, the bureaucrats act differently. For example, appropriately qualified teachers are removed from CDSSs and transferred into CSSs and good CDSSs are converted into CSSs. Furthermore, CDSSs are funded less by the government compared to CSSs. Under these circumstances, there is no way CDSSs can be at par with CSSs and reality on the ground contradicts with policy intent. This study therefore makes the following recommendations:

5.1 Identity of the Schools

This study has found that the community element in these schools does not differ much from what it is in conventional secondary schools. The term ‘community’ is therefore misleading. Furthermore, it sounds illogical to call these schools CDSSs when the ultimate aim is to make them be at par with CSSs. This study therefore proposes that these schools be simply called Local Secondary Schools to signify the fact that these schools are located within the local community areas.

5.2 Appointment of Head Teachers

The study has found that the head teachers of CDSSs are very important players not only in running these schools but also in facilitating community participation hence great care should be taken when appointing teachers to head these schools. To ensure that only competent and innovative teachers are appointed, prospective head teachers should be asked to write brief proposals about what they will do to their schools if they are picked for the posts and the proposals should be read and assessed by a group of officials at the division office comprised of education planners (including the Desk officer for Secondary) and methods advisers. This should be done before the formal interviews are taken. This strategy will ensure that the head teachers who are appointed for these schools are not there to maintain the status quo but they are competent enough to take innovations that can help not only in community participation but in the whole school development. Furthermore, prior to being deployed, every head teacher must be trained in issues pertaining to CDSS administration including community participation.

5.3 School Committees

School committees such as SMCs and PTAs are very important and indispensable at a community school as they are also key actors in community participation. A policy should deliberately be made that each and every CDSS must have both committees in operation so that they may take each other to account. Knowing that the presence of committees at a school is not enough but that they should be seen to do the right things, training of the office-bearers should be given priority. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Malawi Schools and Parents Association (MASPA) should organize training workshops at school cluster levels every year to make sure that every

committee member is aware of his/her role in the committee and the school. In the same vain guidelines about the roles of school committees should be developed through adequate consultation with all stakeholders and they should be adequately disseminated. Furthermore, the people nominated for positions in the school committees must satisfy appropriate minimum qualifications for the post being nominated for and once elected the committee should serve for at least three years. Nomination for committee members should not be limited to parents and guardians who have children in the schools but should also include any person in the community who has appropriate qualification and is willing to serve the school.

5.4 Policy Changes

The study has found that there are some government policies that are inhibiting not only community participation in these schools but also the quality of education in these schools as well. The study therefore recommends for the following policy changes. Firstly, selection of students into these schools should be done through applications after selection into the CSSs is done. All interested eligible candidates should be asked to apply through their divisional offices and selection of the deserving students to be done by officials at the Division Office in collaboration with members of school committees of the concerned CDSS. This will ensure that more students remain in these schools as they will have made an informed decision to belong to these schools.

Secondly, since CDSS students pay the same amount of tuition fees as their counterparts in CSSs despite the fact that the quantity and quality of resources and infrastructures at CDSS are inferior, the tuition fees collected at the CDSS should be kept and used at the

local school to buy or maintain the teaching resources and possibly offer teachers an additional allowance as an incentive to raise their morale. This may ensure that the gap that exists between CDSSs and CSSs narrows, which may make the schools to eventually, attain the anticipated parity.

Thirdly, the study has found that although the Ministry of Education is making tremendous efforts to upgrade the CDSS teachers, most of the upgraded teachers end up teaching in CSSs soon after their graduation hence CDSSs are not benefiting much. To improve in this area this study recommends that every teacher who is taken from a CDSS for a government sponsored upgrading program must be bonded to serve at a CDSS for a period of at least five years before being considered to teach in CSSs. This would ensure that the number of qualified teachers in CDSSs increases which may also contribute to the improvement of the quality of education in these schools. This may motivate members of the local communities who may consequently become more interest in supporting their schools.

Lastly, this study has found that while most of the CDSSs operating from their own buildings are Approved CDSSs those operating from borrowed premises (mostly primary schools) are Non-Approved. However, the Non-Approved CDSSs are victimized further because despite most of them being in need of finances for construction projects, they do not receive government subvention while the Approved CDSSs who have their own premises also get government subvention. This unequal treatment of similar schools may

demoralize members of the local community who may consequently withdraw their support for the schools. All CDSSs should be treated in the same way.

5.5 Recommendations for further study

The study has revealed the existence of some skilled manpower among the local communities which could be made better use of to improve education in the schools. This study therefore recommends a nation-wide survey of the availability of skilled persons in the local communities who could address the staffing needs of the CDSSs. Furthermore, it has been revealed that communication between education authorities and the communities particularly the ordinary members of the local communities remains a problem. An investigation to find out the effective means of communication between education authorities and members of the local communities at the grassroots level is also necessary.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Instructions: This questionnaire is aimed at getting some vital information about your school. Please answer all questions as honestly as possible. Your responses will be accorded with the highest degree of confidentiality.

1. Name of the school: _____

2. Number of teachers:

Male _____

Female _____

Total _____

3. Number of teachers who are qualified to teach at secondary school level

Male _____

Female _____

Total _____

4. School capacity (Number of students who are supposed to be enrolled at the school)

Boys _____

Girls _____

Total _____

5. The actual number of students enrolled at the

Boys _____

Girls _____ 4d

Total _____

6. Number of **teacher houses** present at the school _____

7. Number of **classrooms** _____

8. Number of **toilets**:

For boys _____

For girls _____

Total _____

9. Number of students **transferred to other schools** for the previous year

Boys _____

Girls _____

Total _____

10. Number of students **transferred to this school from other schools** for the previous year

Boys _____

Girls _____

Total _____

11. Number of students who **dropped out** of school for the previous year

Boys _____

Girls _____

Total _____

12. Number of students who **sat for Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) examinations** in the previous year

Boys _____

Girls _____

Total _____

Number of students who **passed Junior Certificate of Education (JCE)** in the previous year at this school

Boys _____

Girls _____

Totals _____

13. Number of students who sat for the Malawi Schools Certificate of Education (MSCE) examination in the previous year.

Boys _____

Girls _____

Total _____

Number of students who **passed the Malawi Schools Certificate of Education (MSCE)** in the previous year at this school

Boys _____

Girls _____

Total _____

14. Name the **subjects currently** being offered at this school:

15. Key **infrastructure items** (tick 'yes' if present and 'No' if absent)

Science laboratories	Yes	No
Multipurpose hall	Yes	No
Football pitch	Yes	No
Net-ball pitch	Yes	No
Drawl or piped water system	Yes	No
School garden	Yes	No
Store-room	Yes	No
Staff-room	Yes	No
Duplicating machine	Yes	No
Sports kit	Yes	No
Tuck shop	Yes	No
Type writer	Yes	No
Computers	Yes	No
Head teacher's office	Yes	No
Classroom desks	Yes	No
Chairs (for student assembly function)	Yes	No
Staff working tables	Yes	No
School library	Yes	No

===== **THE END** =====
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MAY GOD BLESS YOU

Appendix 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEAD-TEACHER

General information:

- What is the enrolment capacity of this school?
- How many students are currently enrolled at this school
- How long have you been a teacher in Malawi?
- How long have you been teaching at CDSS?
- For how long have you been serving as a head teacher/deputy head teacher at CDSS?
- Was there any special training for you to head CDSS? Explain.
- What problems do you face?
- Have you ever read the Education Act or the Malawi Education Policy Investment Framework (PIF)? If yes, what does it say about community participation in the management of schools? (Just briefly state some of the issues you know)

Definition of a community school

- What in your opinion is the definition of Community School?
- Does this school according to your opinion qualify to be a community school? Explain why you think so?
- **Sensitisation or orientation of the local communities about their roles in the school**
 - Are the people of this area aware of the role they should play in this school? Explain.
 - Are members of School Management Committee (SMC) and Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) aware of their duties at the school? Explain.

- What sort of strategies have you put in place to sensitise the community about their role in the management of the school.

How members of the local communities are participating in the running of the school

- Do members of the local community take part in the management of the school?
How?
- Do you have School Management Committee (SMC) and/or Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) at your school?
- If you don't have both of these committees, which committee is operating at your school?
- How is the SMC or PTA set up?
- How often does the SMC or PTA meet?
- When were these committees last formed and how long do members of these committees hold their offices
- State the activities in which members of the local community actively participate at the school? (Whether through SMC, PTA or otherwise):
- State any other way(s) in which the members of the local communities participate in the running of the school.

Challenges stakeholders experience in their quest to improve education in CDSSs

- How satisfied are you with the way the local communities are participating in this school?
- If you are not satisfied, why do you think the members of the local community are not achieving the desired level of participation in school management?

- What do you do to ensure that the local community participate in the management of the school as desired?

Way forward in ensuring that community participation in the management of CDSSs addresses problems in the schools

- In your opinion do you think your school qualifies to be called a community school? Why?
- If you think your school does not qualify to be a community school, suggest what needs to be done in order to qualify as a genuine community school.
- Is the school satisfying the secondary school educational needs of the people of this area? Explain?
- Mention the strategies you have put in place to assist in meeting these needs?
- How satisfied are you with the way the SMC and PTA committee members are working towards school improvement? Explain.
- In your own opinion do you think education qualification of members of school committees matter when discharging their duties in the school? Explain.
- If the level of education qualification attainment matters, what should be the minimum qualification for committee members of SMC and PTA in CDSSs? Explain your answer.
- Suggest any recommendations that you would wish the stakeholders to consider in order to make community participation in the management of CDSSs more effective and efficient

Appendix 3

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN/MEMMBER OF SMC or PTA (used only for the CDSSs where parents did not reach a quorum for Focus Group Interview)

Introduction:

- How long have you been associating with this school
- In what capacity have you been associating with the school? (As a committee member? Parent/guardian? A well-wisher?)

Definition of a community school

- Who established this school? Why was it established
- Who manages this school and how?
- Are you satisfied with the way the school is being managed? Why?
- In your own opinion what do you understand by the term 'community school'

Orientation and sensitisation of the local communities about their roles in the school

- What is your role in this school?
- Were you sensitised of the role that you play in this school?
- Are the people of this area aware of the role they should play in this school?
Explain.

How members of the local community are participating in the running of the CDSS and the challenges they face in their quest to improve education in the school.

- Were you available when these schools were called DECs. If you were available, what roles were members of the local community playing? Briefly outline some of the activities they were carrying out at the school.
- Now that the schools changed from DECs to CDSSs, has the role of played by the members of the local community changed? If yes, how? Are you aware of the curriculum students are pursuing here? If yes, how satisfied are you with what is taught? Explain.
- Are you aware of any disciplinary cases, which take place at this school? If yes, how are they resolved?
- Have you ever been involved in resolving any disciplinary problems involving teachers or students? If yes give examples of the cases where you were involved?
- How are members of the local community involved in resolving discipline cases at this school? Do they experience problems when participating in the resolving of disciplinary cases? Explain.
- How satisfied are you with the way disciplinary cases are handled at the school? Explain. What solutions do people suggest (if any at all) for school authorities to put in place?
- Do you hold any position in SMC or PTA? If yes, what is your position?
- Are members of the community aware of the existence or non-existence of these committees at the school?

- How are people elected into these committees? Are members of the community aware of the functions of these committees?
- Are members of these committees trained about their roles at the school? Why?
- If both SMC and PTA are present at the school, how is their relationship? Has there ever been a conflict between SMC and PTA at the school. If yes, what was the conflict and how was it resolved?
- How is the relationship between SMC or PTA and teachers? What do you think is the reason for this state of affairs?
- Are there any developmental projects taking place at the school? Explain.
- Who initiates these projects? Why?
- Who manages these projects? Why?
- Are there problems, which are experienced as a result of how these projects are initiated and managed? Explain.
- What do you think should be the solution(s) for the problems being experienced?
- How satisfied are you with the academic performance of your school especially at national examinations? Explain.
- Why do you think your school performance is like this?
- Have you ever discussed the school performance at the PTA or SMC or any other forum?
- What are the challenges of community participation in the management of CDSS and how can they be overcome.

- Briefly mention other activities the members of the local communities perform at the school. Are you happy with the way you are participating at this school? If not, what areas of participation would you need some improvement.

Way forward in ensuring that community participation in the management of CDSs addresses problems in these schools

- In your opinion do you think your school qualifies to be referred to as a community school? Why?
- Is the school satisfying the secondary education needs of the people in this community? Explain
- Mention the secondary education needs which are still unmet by the school
- Suggest any recommendation you wish the stakeholders to consider in order to make community participation in the management of the CDSS more effective and efficient in improving the quality of education in CDSSs.

Appendix 4

GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW FOR STUDENTS

1. Definition of a community secondary school
2. Ways in which members of local communities participate in the affairs of the CDSS
3. Problems being experienced by parents and members of the local community in their participation in the management of the CDSS
4. Suggestions as to what needs to be done to ensure that the community participation improves education here.

Appendix 5: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DEC GRADUATES

Instructions:

This questionnaire is aimed at getting information about the role of community participation in the management of Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi. Please answer all questions as honest as possible by filling in the blank spaces or ticking in the appropriate spaces accordingly. The responses will be treated with the greatest level of confidentiality. Your completion of the whole questionnaire will be greatly appreciated

1. What is your sex Male ☐ Female ☐
2. At which Distance Education Centre (s) did you do your secondary school education?

3. Why did you choose to go to the DEC(s) you have mentioned above? (Tick out only the response(s) which was/were applicable to you)

☐ Because of the availability of boarding facilities

☐ Because pass rate was relatively higher than the other nearby DECs

☐ Because it was less expensive such that I was able to meet the fees required

☐ Because it was closer to my home

☐ Any other reason (specify)

4. Did your school have school management committee and/ or PTA?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐
5. Apart from meeting your financial requirements at the school how else were your

parents or guardians participating in school issues?

6. Is there any other ways you would wish your parents/guardians were involved in at your school?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If your answer to question No. 8 is yes, state the way(s) in which you would

wish the parents/guardians were involved in at school?

7. According to your assessment, do you think the local communities around the school(s) at which you were learning had welcomed the establishment of the school in the area.

Yes ☐

No ☐

Explain your answer?

8. Did members of the local community around the school seem to be aware of their role in the management of the school? Yes ☐

No ☐

Explain your answer

9. Tick out the areas of school management in which the local community was actively involved when you were at school:

- ☐ Selection and enrolment of students in the school.
 - ☐ Monitoring of teachers and pupils performance.
 - ☐ Initiating and implementing development projects e.g. building constructions
 - ☐ Resolution of teachers' disciplinary issues.
 - ☐ Resolution of pupils' disciplinary issues.
 - ☐ Determination of extra-curricular activities for the school.
 - ☐ Provision of resource services for curriculum activities e.g. part-time teaching or training.
 - ☐ Contribution of cash for resource mobilisation.
 - ☐ Other areas (if any, specify)
-

10. Student dropout from school is said to be one of the most serious problems besieging the Community Day Secondary School System. During your time as a student at a DEC, how serious was the problem of students drop-out from school.

Not serious ☐ Serious ☐ Very serious ☐

11. Between boys and girls, who were dropping out of school more than the other?

Boys ☐ Girls ☐

12. What was the most common reason for students dropping out of school during your school days?

11. If members of the local community around the school were doing something to minimise the problem of school drop-out from school briefly state the activities they were doing to minimise student drop-out.

12. Had there been no DEC's, would you manage to pursue your education at private school?

Yes ☐

No ☐

13. Settling of school disciplinary cases is another issue that often takes central stage in schools. Were members of the local community involved when resolving conflicts in the school?

Yes ☐

No ☐

14. If your answer is yes, explain briefly the nature of disciplinary cases, which often attracted the involvement of some members of the local community in their resolution.

15. If your answer is no, why do you think this was so? _____

16. The schools, which used to be called DEC's were changed and are now called Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs). If you were to advise the Ministry of Education, what role(s) would you wish the local communities should play in the management of CDSSs?

Thank you very much for participating in this study. May God bless you.

Appendix 6:
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

NAME OF CDSS _____

Instructions:

This questionnaire is aimed at getting information about the role of community participation in the management of Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi. Please answer all questions as honest as possible by filling in the blank spaces or ticking in the appropriate spaces accordingly. All responses will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality possible. Your completion of the whole questionnaire will be greatly appreciated

Your sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

1. How long have you been teaching at a CDSS? _____ Year(s)
2. How long have you been teaching at this school? _____ Year(s)
3. Briefly in your opinion, what is a community school? _____

4. Tick out responsibilities you have ever held at a DEC or CDSS:
 - ☐ As a form-master (form-teacher)
 - ☐ As a disciplinary committee member
 - ☐ As ahead-teacher
 - ☐ As a club patron
 - ☐ As a boarding master
 - ☐ As a member of the school's management committee
 - ☐ As a head of department

5. Do you think the local communities around this school are adequately involved in the management of the

School? Yes ☐ No ☐

If your answer is no, why do you think the local community is not adequately participating in the school management? _____

If your answer is yes, what are they involved in? _____

6. Are you satisfied with the performance of the School Management Committee and / or the School's PTA? Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain your answer _____

7. From the following list of activities, tick out those activities which local communities are actively participating (whether through SMC/ PTA or not):

☐ Monitoring of students' performance at school.

☐ Monitoring of teachers' performance at school

☐ Participating in resolving teacher disciplinary cases

☐ Participating in resolving student disciplinary cases

☐ Formulation and/or selection of extra-curricular activities for students at the school

☐ Implementation of extra-curricular activities at the school

☐ Deciding about what development project(s) to be carried out at the school.

- ☐ Contributing materials and financial resources for school development projects.
- ☐ Monitoring selection and enrolment of students at the school.
- ☐ Monitoring financial transactions at the school.
- ☐ Ensuring of safety and security of students, teachers and school property
- ☐ Ensuring safety of teachers and school property.
- ☐ Monitoring of punctuality and absenteeism of teacher and students at the school

8. Apart from offering education services to secondary school students of the surrounding communities mention any other services which the school offers to the local community surrounding the school. _____

9. Do you agree that there is a genuine ownership of the school by the local community?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain your answer _____

10. In your own opinion, do you agree that greater ownership of the school by the local community can help to improve the quality of education in the schools.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain your answer _____

11. In your opinion do you agree that the local community here is ready to take greater ownership of the school and participation in its governance.

Yes ☐

No ☐

Explain your answer, why you think so _____

12. In the following list of activities, tick out those activities, which you think the local community, should be participating at the school:

- ☐ Monitoring of students' performance at school.
- ☐ Monitoring of teachers' performance at school
- ☐ Participating in resolving teacher disciplinary cases
- ☐ Participating in resolving student disciplinary cases
- ☐ Formulation and/or selection of extra-curricular activities for students at the school
- ☐ Implementation of extra-curricular activities at the school
- ☐ Deciding about what development project(s) to be carried out at the school.
- ☐ Contributing materials and financial resources for school development projects.
- ☐ Monitoring selection and enrolment of students at the school.
- ☐ Monitoring financial transactions at the school.
- ☐ Ensuring of safety and security of students, teachers and school property.
- ☐ Monitoring of punctuality and absenteeism of teacher and students at the school

13. Have you ever read the Education Act? Yes ☐ No ☐

14. Do you know of any role the local community is supposed to play in the management of schools as stipulated in the Education Act.

Yes ☐ No ☐

If your answer is yes, state at least one role of the local community in the management of schools, which is stipulated in this Act. _____

15. Do you know the difference between School Management Committee (SMC) and Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) Yes ☐ No ☐

If your answer is yes explain the difference.

16. In your opinion, is it necessary to have both SMC and PTA at the same secondary school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain your answer

If you are given a choice between SMC and PTA, which committee would you prefer to be operating at a secondary school. SMC ☐ PTA ☐

Give a reason for your answer _____

17. Do you agree that the level of education qualification of the members of SMCs or PTAs matters in order for them to make meaningful contribution in school

management? Yes ☐ No ☐

Give a reason for your answer _____

18. If the level of educational attainment for committee members matters, what should be the appropriate minimum qualification for members of SMC or PTA in CDSSs ?

Are people with the appropriate qualification stated above available in the

surrounding community? Yes ☐ No ☐

19. Student dropout from school is said to be one of the most serious problems besieging the Community Day Secondary School System in Malawi.

How serious is the problem of students' dropout at this school?

Not serious ☐ Serious ☐ Very serious ☐

20. Between boys and girls, who are dropping out of school more than the other?

Boys ☐ Girls ☐

21. What is the most common reason for students dropping out of school ?

22. Do members of the local community around the school do something to

minimise the problem of student drop-out from school?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If your answer is yes, briefly state the activities the members of the local community are doing in order to minimise the problem of student dropout.

23. In your opinion, do you think CDSSs in Malawi are genuine community schools?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Explain your answer_____

24. Suggest any recommendation(s) that you may have for improving community participation in CDSSs. _____

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

May God bless you abundantly.

Appendix 7
**GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW FOR MEMBERS OF
SCHOOL COMMITTEE OR PARENTS**

1. Historical background of the school, particularly how members of the local community were involved in its establishment
2. Definition of a community school
3. Orientation and sensitisation of the local communities about their roles in the school
4. How members of the local community are participating in the running of the school
5. Challenges stakeholders experience in their quest to improve education in the CDSSs
6. Suggestions of the way forward in ensuring that community participation in CDSSs addresses the critical issues of access, quality and relevancy of education in these schools

Appendix 8

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Mr Stern Anold Chepuka, a student from Chancellor College, is conducting a research study entitled An Investigation into the Role of Community Participation in the Management of Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs) in Malawi. The purpose of the study is to determine why community participation in these schools seems to be not adequately impacting positively on education

As one of the key stakeholders in these schools you have been chosen purposely to give your views on this subject. While there may be no direct or immediate benefits to you as a result of your participation, it is hoped that the results of the study will accord teaching professionals, educational management teams (at national, divisional, district and local CDSS levels) and other stakeholders a better and affordable way of improving the quality of education and student learning in CDSSs.

This study uses the face-to-face interviews and/or questionnaires as instruments to collect data from you. In addition to the researcher taking down notes during the interview, the interview may also be audio taped. It is expected that the whole activity will take approximately from half to one hour of your time.

The researcher will make every effort to keep all the information collected from you strictly confidential and your responses will not be linked to you personally. Since individual names will not be included in the analysis, then the information from you will not be released in a way to identify you. That is, no reference will be made in oral or written reports, which will link you to the study.

If you have questions about the study later on, you may contact me at
09 309 749

When you sign this form, you are agreeing to take part in this research study. If you have any questions or there is something you do not understand, please ask. You will receive a copy of this consent form.

CONSENT.

I have read and understand this consent form and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I voluntarily choose to participate in the study, but I

understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study.

I agree to take part in this research study.

_____ Name of participant	_____ Signature of participant	_____ Date
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_____ Name of researcher	_____ Signature of researcher	_____ Date
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I agree to be audio taped during the course of this research interview

_____ Name of participant	_____ Signature of participant	_____ Date
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_____ Name of researcher	_____ Signature of researcher	_____ Date
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