

Factors Affecting the Provision of Quality Education in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi: A Case study of Mangochi District

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Abstract – Quality is now emphasised in the worldwide educational scene as the cornerstone of effective education, meeting basic demands essential to students' overall development. This study explores the variables affecting Malawi's Community Day Secondary Schools' ability to provide high-quality instruction. The research involved two head teachers, two teachers, and twenty students using a qualitative case study design. Focus group talks and in-person semi-structured interviews were used to accomplish methodological triangulation. Important issues revealed by thematic content analysis included inadequate facilities, a lack of resources for teaching and learning, and a lack of community-school engagement. While understanding possible wider consequences, recommendations seek to improve the quality of education.

Keywords – Community Day Secondary schools, education quality, self-boarding, in-service, training.

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1. Introduction

Since quality is the foundation of education, educational policymakers worldwide are increasingly concerned with it. When education is of poor quality, fundamental needs are not met. This would undermine the learners' entire living experience on a social, cultural, and economic level and cause incapacity in their lives.

[1] contend that the issue of education quality has become paramount in numerous countries experiencing enrollment growth and those facing resource constraints. Growing access to basic education has frequently resulted in a decline in quality. Nonetheless, in the quest for the elements that foster excellence, national initiatives and written works have progressively highlighted educators, educational institutions, and local communities as the catalysts for quality, with a particular emphasis on "teacher quality" being recognised as a central area of interest.

Over the last decade, it has become evident that boosting enrollment rates requires concurrent efforts to enhance educational quality. This principle was emphasized at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, which placed a priority on quality education.

Recent evaluations of educational attainment in several African nations have revealed that a sizable portion of youngsters are only picking up a small portion of the information and abilities that are required of them [2]. Malawi is required to support obligatory, high-quality education as a signatory to the treaties that demand free and universal education.

According to [3], the ongoing push for high-quality education continues to steadfastly outweigh the growing emphasis on the necessity of expanding education.

A number of causes, including the 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration for Universal Primary Education (UPE) in all countries, including Malawi, without addressing quality problems, maybe driving national strategies to expand gross enrollment rates quickly.

However, the more comprehensive definition of quality education found in the policies of the majority of nations defines two fundamental components as the foundation of quality: the development of students' social, creative, and emotional skills in addition to their cognitive, intellectual, normative, and psychomotor aspects [4]. The development of the intellectual, normative, and psychomotor dimensions is one of the main, clearly stated goals of all educational systems; therefore, the extent to which a system meets its learning objectives can be a key sign that it has made an effort to provide high-quality education. The social, artistic, and emotional growth of the student is, however, hardly ever assessed or quantified in a meaningful way as a sign of high-quality instruction. However, [5] describes quality education as a metamorphosis. Here, the underlying premise is that education needs to focus on changing students' life experiences.

[6] also takes a more comprehensive approach to quality education, addressing the learning process rather than just inputs. This means that what is considered high-quality education is often redefined and re-specified. It is important to note from this angle that what is considered "best," "good," or "poor" varies from time to time. [6] asserts that the definition of quality education is contingent upon the unique requirements of a nation. As a result, policies aimed at raising the standard of education have to be suitable and tailored to the demands of the nation.

However, [7] also notes that quality has to do with how effectively the material taught and learnt matches the needs of the specific learners in question, taking into account their unique circumstances and opportunities, as well as how well it fits their present and future needs. The author highlights that quality encompasses noteworthy modifications to the educational system, including its goals, curriculum, and instructional technology; the socioeconomic, cultural, and political milieu; and the types of inputs it receives (students, teachers, buildings, equipment, and supplies).

Early missionaries brought education to Malawi in addition to their objective to end the slave trade and propagate Christianity. With the intention of producing a group of Africans who can read religious texts and subsequently preach to other Africans, the missionaries established bush schools where African converts were instructed.

In these schools, instruction typically focused on teaching the Bible and the three Rs: reading, writing, and math. In 1964, Malawi gained its independence. The majority of the nation's elementary and secondary schools were previously administered by missionaries. The primary and secondary schools were divided into four main categories: mission schools, established and run by missionaries, local education authority schools, run by the government through local government structures, and private (or designated) schools, run by private organisations and primarily used by expatriates. Community schools were junior primary schools supported by the government but run by local communities in remote areas [8]. Eight years of elementary school, four years of secondary school, and four years of university education make up Malawi's current educational structure (8-4-4). At the moment, Malawi's Ministry of Education is in charge of all educational levels.

As previously mentioned, when Malawi became independent in 1964, several modifications were made to its educational structure. Back then, primary and secondary school tuition was paid by the students. The government of Malawi started an expansive Free Primary Education (FPE) project after democratic elections in 1994. The newly elected government did this in part in reaction to public demand for education and in acknowledgment of the critical role that primary education may play in reducing poverty over the long run. Access to schooling consequently had a significant upsurge. Free Primary Education, however, was implemented prior to the development of a thorough policy framework that looked at the resources and other implications of FPE.

Moreover, the policy framework that was eventually established was mostly donor-driven and did not involve important players. Because of this, concerns have been raised in Malawi on how well education policy is meeting the requirements of the populace. Due to the increased enrollment in primary schools brought about by the introduction of free primary education, there were also more students pursuing secondary education. Consequently, the Malawian government established Distance Education Centres (DECs) as a place for individuals who had finished their primary education but had no chance of being accepted into government secondary schools to continue their formal education.

These Distance Education Centres eventually adopted the name Community Day Secondary Schools, which they still use today. Since then, students have been chosen to attend CDSSs to complete their secondary education, even though the Centres face numerous difficulties in offering high-quality instruction.

Thus, using the Mangochi district as a case study, this study was designed to look into the difficulties that Malawi's Community Day Secondary Schools are having in offering high-quality education.

1.1. Problem Statement

In the wake of the Dakar World Education Forum, significant progress has been made in ensuring that most children in African nations have access to education; yet, the quality of education, as determined by a number of metrics, still needs improvement [9]. High student achievement, low dropout rates, the availability of certified and educated teachers, and system efficiency are all signs of a quality education. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) presents the most dire image as a whole because the majority of pupils typically leave school as early as the primary grades.

Research on the variables influencing the quality of education offered in Malawi's community day secondary schools has been scant thus far. To fill this information vacuum, this study looked into the variables that influence the delivery of high-quality instruction in Malawian Community Day Secondary Schools.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The study's initial goal was to determine the barriers that prevent Malawi's Community Day secondary schools from offering high-quality instruction. As a result, this study may help the Malawian government devise alternative solutions to lessen the difficulties Community Day Secondary schools experience in raising the standard of secondary school education. Additionally, the study may help Malawi's Ministry of Education, which is part of the government, create efficient policies to raise the standard of secondary education in the nation.

The study's conclusions may also be helpful to those who play a major role in secondary school education delivery at the school level. For instance, head teachers and teachers will be able to identify areas in which their current methods fall short of expectations, which will help them develop effective plans for raising student achievement.

1.3. Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the factors affecting the provision of quality education in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi?

2. How do these factors affect the provision of quality education in Malawian Community Day Secondary Schools?

3. How can these factors be mitigated to promote quality education in Malawian Community Day Secondary Schools?

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by [10] 'Elements that Intervene on the Quality of Teaching and Learning' framework. He argues that there are mainly four categories of factors that affect the quality of teaching and learning. These are family causal factors, academic causal factors which are teacher related factors, personal causal factors which are students related factors, and the school environment. The influence of these factors on the quality of education and the performance of learners however vary from one academic environment to another and from one set of students to the next. There are several parents or family related factors which affect the quality of education. The key one of these factors is the parental attitude towards the schooling of their children. An attitude is a feeling or thought towards somebody or something. The attitude that parents have towards the education of their children may affect their schooling, including performance at school. For example, parents who have a positive attitude towards their children's schooling, including their performance always check their school work to find out how their children are faring and offer necessary assistance. In other words, they offer encouragement to their children and aspire for their children's success, status, and careers. The other parents related factor that affects children's education is the educational level of the parents or the community from which learners come from. The educational level involves the amount and nature of the formal education received by parents from the society from which the child is coming. If parents are educated, they usually appreciate the importance of education and tend to motivate their children to work hard to have a brighter future.

However, we cannot rule out the fact that even some uneducated parents appreciate the importance of education and do likewise. The other parents related factor which affect the education of children are the family size and the birth order of the child in the family where the child comes from. This factor is important in the early years of childhood, mainly in its effect on the extent to which children spend time in conversation with adults. Children from smaller families have more exposure to adult conversation and attention than those in larger families. And it therefore follows that eldest children tend to be more successful.

As the number of children in a family increases, the less attention each child gets from parents. The other parents or family related factor affecting the education of children is the material support of the home. According to [6], if a family is financially sound, it can provide the child with scholastic materials, food, and clothing. Psychologically, such provisions have a bearing on the child's schooling, including performance since he or she has nothing to worry about except to concentrate on his/her academic work. The other factor affecting learners learning is the social disorganization of the family. Social disorganisation includes broken families and neglect of children. A child who comes from a broken family may have trouble concentrating on his/her academic work. Psychologically, this child may have divided attention and be disorganized at school. The other factor that affects learners' learning is abnormal family background of a learner. A family becomes abnormal when one or both parents do not live with the child. This factor may be closely related to social disorganisation. Individual children in all social classes may have an abnormal background and this in one way or the other may affect their performance.

The environmental factors affecting the quality of education according to [10], are mainly the differences between urban and rural school environments. According to Harb, it has been observed that there are differences in the attainment of academic success between urban and rural children. Children from rural backgrounds tend to be substantially inferior academically to those from urban backgrounds. This difference between rural and urban children is primarily caused by differences in the nature and presence of infrastructure between schools in rural and urban areas. Harb argues that generally, schools in rural areas are of poor quality as compared to those in urban areas. Some rural schools are difficult to access due to poor roads, and this situation becomes worse during the rainy season. Rural schools often have poorly constructed classrooms, lacking basic amenities which may affect learners' attention and concentration. From the comments teachers make, it has been observed that many teachers are not interested in teaching in rural areas because of poor housing and lack of basic services like hospitals, shopping centres, and other basic services and amenities. This either poses a problem of insufficient teachers in rural areas or an increased number of under-qualified teachers. The other environmental difference between rural and urban schools is the availability of Learning Resource Centres in urban areas. According to Harb, in urban areas, students have access to libraries and video and television centres where they can watch education videos and

even borrow books. This enhances learning. Rural students do not have such facilities; except for the school library which only has some outdated books or very few books.

In remote schools, the instructor is the only person the pupils can depend on for an education.

The "identity" of the teacher and the type of professional development they receive are the two key teacher-related elements that impact the quality of education. Teacher's identity or work habits determine the quality of their instruction. Teacher's "beliefs, dispositions, and interests towards teaching given the conditions of his/her work" constitute their "teacher identity." A teacher's commitment to teaching and skill is shaped by their feelings towards their work. According to Harb, teachers are generally dissatisfied with their pay and working circumstances, which makes teaching seem like "employment of the last resort."

Regarding how professional development for teachers affects the caliber of education, Harb contends that hiring inexperienced teachers and inadequate teacher preparation are two issues that have a negative impact on education quality. According to Harb, the quality of education is impacted when there is a shortage of qualified teachers since initial education and training programs are crucial in providing teachers with the knowledge and abilities they need to teach. Regarding the impact of students on the caliber of education, Harb contends that students are also essential in enhancing the caliber of education. Harb contends that to contribute to a high-quality education, students have to be able to actively engage in their learning activities in addition to teachers needing to be good teachers. Certainly, there are more psychological and physiological aspects that influence students, and could impact their engagement in the teaching and learning process and, leading to lower educational standards. Learners' poverty is one of these psychosocial and physical aspects. Harb argues that poverty has an impact on education and that the majority of underprivileged students are those who attend rural schools where they are unable to focus in class due to feelings of hunger. Similarly, "on occasion, they do not wear a jersey or are ill-prepared for school, which makes it difficult for them to focus in class when it is cold."

2. Literature Review

A literature review is an extensive and critical assessment of earlier studies. It is an overview and synopsis of a specific field of study that enables readers to understand the motivation for your pursuit of that particular field of study [11].

The factors influencing the delivery of high-quality education in Malawi's community day secondary schools were the main focus of this study. For this reason, the majority of the literature examined the variables influencing the delivery of high-quality instruction in schools. The assessment of the literature took into account research on variables that have impacted the delivery of high-quality instruction in various international educational systems. This study's analysis of the literature on the variables influencing the delivery of high-quality education in other educational systems also yielded information on suggestions for how Malawi might address the variables that might be adversely affecting the standard of instruction and learning.

Numerous national and international academic works have been written about the issues impacting educational quality in various educational systems across the globe. Among the difficulties are:

- Long Distances to and from School

Malawian secondary school pupils typically travel great distances on foot to and from class. According to [12], the majority of pupils travel great distances on foot to and from their individual schools. Due to the issue of long commutes to school, students are more inclined to choose self-boarding, which puts them in danger of being taken advantage of, especially the girls. According to [13], there is a considerable increase in student absenteeism when commuting from one's own house or self-boarding facility, which has a negative impact on academic achievement. Chronic absenteeism is more common and obvious among students who work from self-boarding rental homes and their homes, according to [14].

According to [15], the rising rate of student absenteeism can be linked to poverty since the majority of students come from low-income families and find it difficult to get into full-boarding schools; as a result, they are compelled to learn from home. However, [14] notes that pupils who board themselves and those who commute from home to school appear to be more likely to lack supervised study time. Monitoring student research conducted out of private dorms and communities is not required by law. In a similar vein, [12] contends that females are more vulnerable to danger when they commute large distances to school.

Consequently, the distances that students have to travel to and from school during the early and evening hours significantly hinder their attendance. As a result, this has a detrimental effect on their overall academic performance since chronically absent students miss out on important topic information, which makes it harder for them to review the material they missed while they were not

in class [14]. The retention of students in the classrooms, particularly female students, has improved with support from the Malawian government and various non-governmental organisations, such as the Social Cash Transfer Intervention in Malawi. This is because the interventions have helped lower certain costs associated with education, like school fees and the provision of uniforms for students, among other things.

- Lack of In-Service Education and Training (INSET)

There is a severe teacher shortage in secondary schools in Malawi. Furthermore, the majority of primary and secondary school teachers do not frequently attend INSETs to further their professional development and pedagogical advancement [16]. This comes at the price of the curriculum reforms that the schools are going through. Teachers are ill-equipped to handle the changing nature of the curriculum and the novel methods it promotes because of their lack of training. As a result, there is a compromise in the quality of curriculum delivery, which has an adverse effect on education quality as well.

As previously mentioned, the government established Community Day Secondary Schools as a result of the implementation of Free Primary Education in accordance with the Education for All policy. Consequently, there is a severe scarcity of competent secondary school teachers in the secondary subsector. The fact that primary school instructors at CDSSs are disproportionately underqualified to teach at secondary schools serves as an example of this. Through INSET, the performance of these underqualified teachers can only be improved. Therefore, when the INSET is seldom available for these teachers, it becomes a serious issue.

Due to a lack of financing for teacher professional development, relatively few teachers in Malawi currently participate in any kind of meaningful in-service training or education (INSET). Furthermore, there has not been much study done on the preparation of secondary school teachers to help them decide what changes to make to their methods of instruction. This results in subpar secondary education and teachers.

- Low Teacher Knowledge of Subject Matter

This aligns with [17] study that examined the factors impacting curriculum implementation in Israeli schools and found that a prerequisite for effective curriculum teaching and learning was the availability of specialised teachers in particular.

One issue that can come up when teaching is a teacher's inadequate knowledge of the new material, as noted by [18] in their study of professional development and change in science education in the Netherlands. Additional research by [9] showed that inadequate subject-matter expertise among teachers was a barrier to the effective delivery of curriculum content in the classroom.

This is consistent with a study conducted in [11] that looked into the factors influencing curriculum implementation in Israeli schools. The study's findings indicated that the availability of specialised teachers in particular subjects who can successfully deliver the curriculum in those subjects was one of the school-based conditions and constraints that affected curriculum teaching and learning in the classroom. This means that professors are occasionally permitted to teach subjects in which they lack expertise, which lowers the quality of education by resulting in subpar material delivery.

- Lack of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Resources or Materials

According to [17], the availability of instructional resources in a school had an impact on how well students were taught in Israel. Similar results were found in two other studies by [19], [20], who stressed that one of the biggest obstacles to the provision of high-quality education is the continued lack of adequate resources for teaching, learning, and assessment. [21] make the case that textbooks are crucial for learning and self-study because they give teachers a better organised and thorough way to communicate the material. When textbooks are inadequate, the majority of Malawian students who sit for national exams turn to their teachers as the guardians of their knowledge and abilities [22]. Due to their lack of direct access to the material being tested, students consequently perform poorly on national exams.

- Poor Work Place Conditions

The school is a workplace, teachers are employees, and teaching is labour [23]. Human resources are the most important component of a school's operation since they are workplaces [24]. More people are realising how important it is for teachers to have access to materials and to have excellent learning environments to educate effectively and efficiently in classrooms.

The study literature has established the association between teachers' decisions to remain in the classroom and their working conditions. According to [25], workplace circumstances are determined by how particular jobs are organised and managed in the

workplace. She proposed three main organisational factors that affect teachers' dedication to their work. Teachers need to be given "psychological rewards, where people gain estimates of their particular worth in a performance-based context,". Furthermore, the author stated that favourable relationships with students, peers, supervisors, and guardians serve as a source of motivation and enhance educators' dedication to their profession.

Teachers need to be given the chance to be independent in their professional lives and to participate in decisions that affect their students' education.

Teachers should be given opportunities for professional development, encouraged to show confidence in their capacity to instruct students, and convinced that their work has a good impact on students for teaching to have meaning.

In Malawi, teachers' working conditions are typically thought to be subpar. Lack of desks, a lack of instructional resources, large class sizes, a lack of incentives, an unclear career path, public disapproval of teachers, subpar housing for teachers, a long commute for teachers who must rent homes far from schools, and other issues all contribute to the poor working conditions for teachers [16]. These play a part in the subpar performance of educators and students. Even though Malawi has one of the largest budgets allotted to education, very little of that money is used to improve the physical state of the schools. This indicates that secondary school teachers have unfavourable attitudes towards the teaching profession since their housing is not in good condition. As a result, these teachers end up giving inefficient instruction, which contributes to a decline in the standard of instruction in Malawian schools.

- Overcrowded Classrooms Due to the Introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE)

Secondary education is receiving more attention from the Malawian Government and funders, and measures are being developed to make secondary education more broadly available, more pertinent, and of higher quality [26]. This is partly a reaction to the achievements that have been made since the start of Free Primary Education. Secondary schools, like Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) and Conventional Secondary Schools, are being built to accommodate the growing number of students who are finishing their primary education cycle since the beginning of FPE.

Due to the significant rise in primary completion brought about by FPE, there is now a greater need for additional secondary supply.

Countries like Malawi are currently dealing with a huge social demand for greater access to secondary education that is of higher quality and more pertinent. The Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper [16] states that enrollment climbed by more than 50% in the first year of the FPE, from 1.9 million in 1993–4 to over 3.2 million in 1994–5. The noteworthy accomplishments of FPE have implications for secondary education, particularly in relation to instruction and student-teacher ratios. The demand for highly qualified secondary school teachers has rapidly expanded as a result of secondary education's growth. In Malawi, the demand for teachers is expected to outpace the supply. The government is under pressure to find effective and efficient methods for attracting, training, supporting, and keeping qualified secondary school teachers due to these factors as well as severe budgetary constraints. As primary school enrollment and retention rates rise.

Due to the rapid expansion of the primary and secondary school sub-sectors of education following the introduction of FPE, there has often been a lack of a strong policy and a clear strategic plan to meet the overwhelming numbers of learners in the education sector. Consequently, there is now a greater need for teachers. Due to the large number of inexperienced and underqualified instructors hired to manage the massive enrollment of students in elementary schools, the result has been poor educational quality [27]. The Government's conversion of Malawi's Centres of Distance Education into Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs) was another outcome of FPE. There were repercussions from this "glorification" of MCDEs into CDSSs. As a result, the Government removed what would be considered "better" teachers. There were repercussions from this "glorification" of MCDEs into CDSSs. As a result, the administration removed what would be considered "better" primary school instructors and replaced them with inexperienced high school teachers. This further undermined elementary and secondary education as a result. This resulted in a high number of underqualified and unqualified instructors working in most elementary schools, as well as the transfer of underprepared teachers to secondary schools.

- Cultural Attitudes and Practices

It has been observed that cultural influences play a significant role in pupils' subpar performance. Notably, a child's chances of receiving an education are influenced by the attitudes of their parents towards learning. Parents decide whether or not their child goes to school at first, and they frequently have an impact on the type of education their child receives.

According to [28], boys were given more exercise books by their parents than girls. Encouragement for kids to go to school can have an impact on their academic success and perseverance. Similarly, [29] discovered that relatively few Malawian mothers believed that educating females was more essential than educating boys. The most often mentioned cause was that girls were married or became pregnant during the school year, which led to waste and a loss of investment in their education. Conversely, moms in Kenya favoured supporting their daughters' education since they believed that females were more accountable than men for supporting the family financially. In Malawi as well as Kenya, not a single parent supported the education of females.

In Malawi, cultural variables have been found to play a significant role in the school dropout rate of both boys and females. In her study on the factors influencing girls' involvement and perseverance in school, [30] discovered that parents' willingness to pay more for their daughters' initiation than for normal schooling was a significant contributing factor to school dropout rates. Little girls decide to put what they learn at the initiation ceremonies into practice rather than continuing their education because initiation prepares them for marital life. In a similar vein, [24] assert that although girls and boys encounter numerous repetitions, girls are more negatively impacted by the advent of puberty due to the conflicting demands of school, home, and community, as well as the possibility of pregnancy and early marriage.

Opportunities and limitations that are specific to a given gender are shaped by culturally determined definitions of women and men and their responsibilities within that culture. Thus, cultural norms and conventions influence the existence of discriminatory views toward girls' education. When girls enter adolescence, mobility constraints appear in many countries; hence, the influence is mainly on retention than on entry [31]. When a girl reaches puberty in some tribes in Malawi, she is taught the knowledge and wisdom of her community to preserve and advance it. These guidelines are thought to be specifically pertinent to a girl, preparing her for life in a village as a bride and mother. Parents may object to their daughters' ongoing attendance at school as a result of conflicts that occasionally occur between the lessons given at home (during initiation rites) and at school [22]. The numerous tribal and cultural taboos that prescribe what and what not to do at different stages of development, and which may contradict the demands of schooling, do have a direct impact on females' behaviour.

Additionally, gender-specific beliefs regarding the division of labour and cultural variables unique to Malawi influence the decision of whether or not a kid should attend school, as noted by [31]. Additionally, [32] contends that gender-based social roles and labour divisions moderate the disadvantage of girls' schooling. Gender-based labour disparities exist in the majority of nations, affecting access to education in both household-based and good-and-service production. Furthermore, it has been observed that Malawian parents strongly favour schooling their sons over their daughters [14]. The most frequent justification offered for favouring boys' education is that girls frequently marry or become pregnant, which prevents them from finishing their education [19].

3. Research Methodology

This study used a case study methodology and a qualitative technique to research. A case study design can facilitate in-depth analysis and provide an explanation for specific events [33]. Case studies provide a distinctive viewpoint on a specific person or group [34]. Two Community Day Secondary schools in Malawi's southern Mangochi district served as the study's sites. Two head teachers, eight teachers (four from each school), four parent representatives, and sixteen students from the two secondary schools that were chosen were all involved in the study.

All head teachers from both schools participated in the study as they oversaw the quality of teaching and learning. Both head teachers were male, aged 46 and 51, with one holding a Bachelor's degree in Education and the other a Diploma in Education. Their respective experiences as head teachers were 5 and 16 years. Among the 8 teachers involved, there were an equal number of males and females, all possessing either Bachelor of Education or Diploma in Education degrees. Of the 16 students in the study, 6 were male and 10 were female, ranging in age from 12 to 23. Additionally, parents' representatives were included in the study due to their insight into the quality of education and factors affecting it in their children's schools, as students commute from home to school.

Two different techniques were employed to gather data for this investigation. These consisted of focus groups with the students and in-person, semi-structured interviews with the head teachers, instructors, and parents' representatives [30]. Additionally, the two approaches worked well together to give the study methodological triangulation. Cross-checking the reliability of the study's data was made easier by the use of methodological triangulation.

Thematic content analysis was used to examine the study's findings. This technique of data analysis is defined by [35] as a means of categorising data based on themes, concepts, or comparable characteristics. The subjects covered in this study's material largely corresponded to the various elements that influence the standard of instruction in the schools that were examined. To collect data, the agreement of the participants who were interviewed was secured.

4. Findings and Discussion

The main objective of this study was to describe the factors that affect the provision of quality education in Community Day Secondary schools in Malawi. Data analysis led to the following key themes: inadequate teaching and learning resources, inadequate qualified teachers, underqualified teachers, long distances to and from school, lack of in-service training for teachers, and inadequate infrastructure for teaching and learning. These are presented in the sub-sections below.

- Inadequate Teaching and Learning Resources

The head teachers of the two schools that took part in this study expressed dissatisfaction over their institutions' failure to deliver the high-quality education that was anticipated because of a shortage of essential teaching and learning resources, particularly textbooks. The head teachers complained that one of the main factors impairing the quality of education provided in their schools is the lack of textbooks for the students. This is because the textbooks are not matched with the number of students, which affects how smoothly and effectively lessons are presented because teachers rely on one student reading aloud so that others will hear. Students in the study's participating schools attested to the problem of inadequate teaching and learning resources. When asked whether the resources provided by the school curriculum are adequate for learning the subjects covered in the curriculum, for instance, 14 out of 16 pupils (80%) said that the textbooks were insufficient. One pupil from school B, for instance, claimed that:

“Mostly we are told to be in groups so that we use the few textbooks. This leads to some students just playing in the groups as they are not able to access the textbooks due to large numbers of students in class.”

This challenge makes it hard for teachers to teach effectively since textbooks are a pre-requisite for quality education and they therefore need to be made available and in required supplies as they contribute to improving the quality of education.

This finding concurs with [36] who argues that the provision of quality education requires heavy financial support that would help in purchasing appropriate teaching and learning resources which are key for ensuring quality education.

- Inadequate Infrastructure for Teaching and Learning

The purpose of this study was to determine how the quality of education provided is impacted by the school environment. The physical facilities of the school, including their availability and state, were questioned about their impact on the delivery of high-quality education. The head teachers were asked to elaborate on these points. The study's findings showed that the participating schools lacked the infrastructure that government secondary schools are supposed to have to deliver high-quality instruction. According to the report, there is not enough physical infrastructure in schools, and what is there is inadequate shape to provide high-quality instruction. As an illustration, the head teacher of school "A" voiced complaints about:

“The school hall was pulled down to replace it with a new one but the project has stagnated for three years, the main challenge is conducting school assemblies during the rainy season. The School Library is also very small. There is a need to enlarge the school library because the number of learners is large which does not match with the capacity of the current library”.

Similarly, Head teacher B was quoted complaining that:

“This school does not have a hall. This school needs a hall that will be used for conducting general assemblies, most of the time we do not conduct assemblies, especially during the rainy season because we don't have a place to converge for such meetings. The school needs additional chairs, desks, teacher's houses, and a classroom block which was blown off by winds should be maintained, a Science laboratory and a library should be built at this school”.

The above comments demonstrate how lack of infrastructure makes teaching and learning a difficult enterprise and this situation negatively affects the provision of quality education.

This finding agrees with [37], which argues that lack of infrastructure hinders the provision of quality education.

- Lack of In-service Training for Teachers

All the head teachers from both schools involved in the study remarked that in service training equips teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for

effective teaching. They however indicated that they have not been able to organize such training. For example, the head teacher of school 'A' remarked that:

“Yes, every year we are supposed to have at least two INSETS. Although I prepare for these INSETS I am not able to conduct them because I face challenges when it comes to funding of such programs and lack of funds emerges as my strong challenge for not organizing such activities”.

In-service trainings are indeed significant and in the absence of these, teachers fail to teach effectively and this affects the quality of education in the schools.

This finding agrees with [38] who argues that in most countries, teachers are not properly introduced to new developments in teaching strategies to improve the quality of education. Similarly, [26], argues that if teachers are to be mobilized in support of the improvement of education quality, both initial and in-service teacher education have to convince them of their crucial role in promoting high quality education. Likewise, [39], argues that education authorities need to provide in-service trainings that are needed for the improvement of education quality.

- Long Distances to and from School

The study found that long distances to and from school which learners travel affect their learning as the learners become tired and cannot concentrate on their learning. For example, the head teacher of school “A” remarked that:

“Punctuality of students is a serious problem because students come very far from the school, so this also contributes to the absenteeism of learners because they usually get tired after walking for so long distances and eventually they drop-out from school”.

Similarly, the Head teacher of school B concurred with the head teacher of school “A” and remarked that;

“Students come from very far to the school. This delays the time of starting classes and also contributes to the absenteeism of learners because they usually get tired after walking long distances. Because they come from far distances to school, some learners opt for self-boarding, exposing them to the risk of exploitation. The female learners are prone to this exploitation as a result they drop out of school due to unwanted pregnancies”.

Long commutes from home to school have a detrimental impact on the quality of education provided in Malawi's Community Day Secondary Schools, as seen by the remarks above. This result is consistent with [30] claim that Malawian students' attendance at school is significantly hampered by the

distances they must travel to and from school in the morning and evening. Because they miss out on important topic knowledge, kids who are chronically absent from school find it more and more difficult to review the material they missed. This has a negative impact on their overall academic performance.

- Underqualified Teachers

When it comes to providing students with a high-quality education, teachers play a critical role as input factors in their education. The delivery of high-quality education depends heavily on teachers. Nonetheless, it was determined by the study's findings that most secondary school teachers lack the necessary qualifications to deliver high-quality instruction. For instance, information showed that some teachers are employed by secondary schools despite possessing the Malawi School Certificate of Education, which serves as the certificate of completion for the secondary school cycle. This adds to Malawi's Community Day Secondary Schools' subpar educational standards.

- Inadequate Qualified Teachers

The study revealed that the provision of quality education in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi is hampered by the shortage of qualified teachers. For example, the head teacher of school "B" complained that:

"This school has a serious problem of shortage of teachers and the school is trying everything possible to improve on providing quality education by requesting additional teachers from the Divisional Education Manager's office".

The comments above show that lack of qualified teachers is negatively affecting the provision of quality education in the Community Day Secondary schools in Malawi.

This finding agrees with [40] who argue that quality education in schools depends on school-based conditions and constraints which include the availability of qualified teachers in particular subjects who can deliver the content effectively in a particular subject. Shortage of qualified teachers leads to poor education quality because teachers are allowed to teach subjects in which they are not qualified and specialized to teach.

Since leadership has an impact on the job that teachers do, it is a significant factor in the provision of high-quality education. The caliber of work produced by other employees, such as support personnel, is likewise impacted by leadership. The study's interview data with students showed that the participants in the study felt that the headteachers of the two schools were difficult to get in touch with

when they needed help with various issues they were having at school. Regarding the nature of the working relationships between head teachers and staff, as well as between head teachers and parents and community members, parent interview data indicated that these relationships are not as strong as would be expected to guarantee the provision of high-quality education in the schools. A kind and approachable head teacher is a sign of a good school. Given that schools are public institutions, it is imperative that shared responsibility and a healthy working relationship be used to encourage parent and community involvement. This helps to ensure that the schools are offering high-quality instruction.

- Large Class Sizes

This study revealed that there is a large student to teacher ratio in the schools involved in this study which is affecting the provision of quality education in the schools. For example, the head teacher of school B complained that:

"This school has a serious problem of shortage of teachers. The number of teachers does not match with the high number of learners at the school. The school is trying everything possible to improve the quality of education by requesting for additional teachers from the Division and District Education Manager's office".

The aforementioned statements made by the head of one of the two study-affiliated schools demonstrate that the institutions have a large student body but a shortage of professors to adequately support students' education. This has a detrimental impact on Malawi's Community Day Secondary Schools' ability to provide high-quality education. This outcome is consistent with [41] claim that higher-quality education may be achieved through smaller class sizes because they enable teachers to concentrate more on the needs of each student and spend less time dealing with disruptions.

5. Conclusion

This study looked into the variables influencing Malawian Community Day Secondary schools' ability to provide high-quality instruction. This study has shown that large class sizes, a lack of in-service teacher training, a lack of collaboration between the school and the community, a lack of resources for teaching and learning, a lack of and poor infrastructure (such as school halls, teacher houses, classrooms, school libraries, and science laboratories), and these factors are all having a negative impact on the quality of education provided in Malawi's Community Day Secondary Schools.

Therefore, to improve the quality of education, the study suggests that the Ministry of Education should: (1) provide enough textbooks; (2) establish science and computer laboratories and libraries; and (3) employ a sufficient number of qualified teachers who can provide high-quality instruction and help students perform well academically.

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