Exploring quality assurance and enhancement practices in Malawi's TEVET institutions: A case of selected Community Skills Development Centers

By

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DECLARATION

I, **Sifiwe Bamusi** hereby declare that this dissertation, entitled **"*Exploring Quality Assurance and Enhancement Practices in Malawi's TEVET Institutions: A Case of Selected Community Skills Development Centres"***, towards the awarding of the degree of Master of Education in Leadership and Management, at the Mzuzu University to be my original work and has never been submitted to any university for the reward of any degree. All the sources used in this paper have been acknowledged in the form of references. This paper was written under the supervision of Dr. Zizwa Msukuma.

Student Signature :

Date : 3rd August, 2023.

Supervisor Signature:

Date : 3rd August, 2023.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who always ensure that I receive the best and always stand with me in all situations. To my siblings who have been cheering on for me to succeed. To all my family and friends you have made this journey to be adventurous.

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My journey of writing this dissertation has been made easy because of the great deal of support and assistance that was rendered to me.

First and foremost I would like to thank God for always holding my hand and providing me with the strength to push through and for Him making it possible for me to get this far.

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ABSTRACT

CSDCs are considered to be the bridge for the vulnerable population hence required to establish and implement internal quality assurance mechanisms to safeguard and improve the standards and quality of their education programs. However, there is inadequate information on essential elements that have been put in place for quality assurance and enhancement practices and if the latter is being implemented by CSDCs. Therefore, the study's main focus explored essential elements in implementing quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices. The study specifically explored quality assurance strategies, procedures, and enhancement practices being implemented by TEVETA for CSDCs, identified how CSDCs are managing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices, identified gaps being faced by CSDCs, and established possible solutions and mitigation strategies towards the identified gaps in the management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices. The case study design was used to evaluate and conduct an in-depth analysis through the qualitative approach. It was conducted in 3 selected CSDCs, the Ministry of Labor, TEVETA Headquarters, and 3 regional offices where 20 academic and management participants took part. The data was collected through in-depth interviews that were recorded, transcribed, and an extraction of the codes, categories, and themes were derived. In complementing the findings from the interviews, results from the document analysis were also triangulated. The findings of the study have shown that the parameters for quality assurance and enhancement practices in vocational education center on a precise overview of key pointers which if applied can acquire great results in TVET. The study recommends having resource mobilization and social enterprises at the CSDCs level, timely curriculum review and update, staff capacity building, improved monitoring structures, and establishment of a Technical Teachers Training Institution.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONA AND ACRONYMS

CBET	Competency-Based Education and Training
CSDCs	Community Skills Development Centers
CVC	Curriculum Value Chain
JCE	Junior Education Certificate
ILO	International Labor Organization
MGDs	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education
QA	Quality Assurance
TEVET	Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education Training
TEVETA	Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education Training Authority
TQM	Total Quality Management
TVET	Technical, Vocational, Education, and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Quality - the ability or degree with which a product, service, or phenomenon conforms to an established standard which makes it to be superior to the other

Quality assurance - planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in educational services provided by training providers under the remit of relevant authorities or bodies

Enhancement practices – the use of evidence to plan, implement and evaluate deliberate steps intended to improve the student learning experience or an aspect of institutional quality management that is designed to secure, in the context of the constraints within which individual institutions operate, steady, reliable and demonstrable improvements in the quality of learning opportunities.

TVET - a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic life.

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Technical, Vocational, Education, and Training (TVET) is a specialized education designed to empower learners through the development of their technical skills, human abilities, cognitive understanding, attitudes, and work habits to prepare learners adequately for the world of work or position them practically for self-employment after graduation (Winer, 2000; Oni, 2007). UNESCO and International Organisation (ILO) (2002) have defined TVET as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic life.

The changes and diversification of industry skill needs, growing mobility of workers, and the expansion of TVET markets have resorted to countries investing in bilateral mechanisms to improve the connectivity of their TVET provision to support regional economic integration through cross-border investment and the mobility of skilled labor (Bateman, Keating, Gillis, Dyson, Burke & Coles, 2012). Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled (ISO, 2015).

Concerning training and educational services, quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in educational services provided by training providers under the remit of relevant authorities or bodies (Keating &Vickers 2009). Therefore, a set of activities are established by relevant authorities or bodies to ensure that educational services satisfy customer requirements systematically and reliably. In addition, there are several mechanisms available for quality assurance in TVET and countries utilize different combinations depending on the

characteristics of the TVET system and they include compliance or evaluative-based and context, input, process, or output based. Keating & Vickers (2009) elaborate further stating that TVET systems across most countries have multiple origins which have evolved from apprenticeship systems, secondary technical education, private and public technical education colleges, and industry training. Therefore, this has led many countries to operate under different government ministries or departments and different sets of qualifications and quality assurance arrangements. Records have shown that in many countries an integrated TVET system has only recently been formed and in many other countries an integrated system has not yet been formed therefore making the task of building a quality assurance system for TVET not standardized as countries have different experiences and approaches (Bateman et al, 2012).

The African Union Agenda 2063 (2015) has outlined intentions of strengthening TVET by scaling up investments, establishing a pool of high-quality TEVET centers across Africa, fostering greater links and industry, and aligning to labor markets to improve the skills profile on employability and entrepreneurship. In addition, the AU Agenda seeks to close the skills gap across the continent by establishing an African Accreditation Agency to develop and monitor educational quality standards to expand student academic mobility across the continent and harness universities and their networks and other options for enabling high-quality university education. Therefore, if TVET is well positioned it can play a multidimensional role of stimulating economic growth, social development, improving conventional education, empowerment, wealth creation, poverty reduction, and skills enhancement (Maclean, 2011).

1.2 Background

The Government of Malawi recognizes the role the education sector plays in the socioeconomic development of the nation thus at the national level; education and skills development is among the five key priority areas in the third Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS III, NESIP,2020). The majority of young people in Malawi tend to drop out early and not acquire the basic skills despite an increase in the recent school enrollment of which only 35% of the primary students complete this stage which leads to 18% enrollment in the secondary education (OECD Development Centre, 2018). The results from the OECD Development Centre further show that there is the lowest enrolment in both vocational and tertiary education being represented by 2.2% and 1.0% respectively.

The increased school dropout rates, therefore, have a great impact on the high unemployment rates. It has been discovered that three-quarters of the young population who are not in school either have no education (9%) or 67% only have completed primary education therefore not qualifying them for further education (OECD Development Centre, 2018). Roughly, the Malawi Population and Housing Census (2018) found that 81.9% of the young population is unemployed which exposes the majority of the youth in low skilled jobs in the informal economy that offers little prospects for advancement or for them to just escape poverty and exploitation (ILO, 2018).

1.2.1 *TEVET in Malawi*

The Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education Training (TEVET) sector in Malawi is considered to be very diverse as it covers formal, informal, and non-formal learning. It takes place in a wide range of settings including schools, public and private vocational centers and institutes,

higher education institutions, and workplaces in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy (UNESCO, 2019).

It is therefore well recognized that knowledge and skills are important driving forces for economic growth and social development in any country. That being the case the nation of Malawi has established Community Skills Development Centres in all the regions catering to vulnerable individuals mostly youth who cannot enroll in formal TEVET institutions to equip them with skills that are aligned to labor market needs in priority areas of the economy to increase access to salaried jobs and self-employment for human capital development for poverty reduction and growth of the economy (World Bank, 2020).

The UNESCO (2019) report has outlined that TEVET reforms around the world have shown to be heavily driven by a strong need to ensure that training provision is responsive to and relevant to the labor market and industry needs. In addition; among other objectives, TEVET reforms in Malawi have been driven by the need to improve the quality of TEVET provision. However, the reforms have focused largely on strengthening the governance of quality and quality assurance systems which requires more than implementing a quality assurance system.

As indicated above, the environment in which the Malawi TVET institutions operate is rapidly changing. There is a huge demand and enrolment expansion in TVET institutions due to the government policy of free primary education which was introduced in 1994 (UNESCO, 2010). The introduction of free primary education has not guaranteed students to reach tertiary education in huge numbers as desired hence those who have not managed to reach that far have the

opportunity to further their studies through TVET education. As a result, with this demand, there have been a lot of TVET institutions that have been established to fill in the gap that is there in the nation.

Focusing on Community Skills Development Centers (CSDCs) which are the TVET-established institutions that bridge the gap that is there for the vulnerable population to acquire TVET skills and to play a role in the socio-economic development of the nation; as TVET institutions, CSDCs are required to establish and implement internal quality assurance mechanisms to safeguard and improve the standards and quality of their education programs (UNESCO, 2010). However, there is inadequate information on essential elements that have been put in place required for quality assurance processes and the extent to which current implementation of quality assurance practices has reached CSDCs. Therefore, this study will further narrow down the gaps these institutions have as they are implementing quality assurance mechanisms.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

UNESCO's (2019) analytical report states that TEVET players in Malawi have grown tremendously. Current reports show that some unregistered TEVET providers issue certificates without external quality assurance checks. Meanwhile, programs being offered for the same occupation by different providers vary in terms of duration, content, and assessment; hence service providers tend to deliver programs that are not registered or accredited by TEVETA. Worse still the trainers do not meet the qualification standards for a TEVET trainer. All this compromises the confidence that employers have in the TEVET system and the satisfaction of its graduates.

There have been demands from industry representatives for intensified effective coordination and participation, especially in the setting up of standards, monitoring, and reporting to minimize duplication of efforts. However, there is still weak coordination in the TEVET sector which is hindering the further improvement of TEVET standards. The quality assurance process for the TEVET sector is still fragmented and uncoordinated although TEVETA indicates its efforts to ensure this issue is addressed (UNESCO, 2019).

Despite the legal provision through the TEVET Act to promote quality training, quality culture has not been adopted and challenges remain in these institutions (TEVET Act, 1999). The TEVET Act no.6 of 1999, provides for the promotion of TVET in Malawi. Specifically, part III of the Act, section 4 subsection 2(h) mandates TVET institutions to develop Quality Assurance systems to promote teaching and learning provided by technical education and training institutions in Malawi. Technical education is a prerequisite to the output of a skilled workforce.

There is inadequate information on essential elements that have been put in place required for quality assurance processes; and the extent to which current implementation of quality assurance practices has reached in CSDCs. This has been a much-neglected research area. This study, therefore, is dedicated to filling this gap.

1.4 Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study is to explore quality assurance and enhancement practices in Malawi's TEVET institutions focusing on Community Skills Development Centres (CSDCs). CSDCs are considered to be the bridge for the vulnerable population hence they are required to establish and implement internal quality assurance mechanisms to safeguard and improve the standards and

quality of their education programs and possibly increase their student's employability. However, there is inadequate information on essential elements that have been put in place required for quality assurance processes and the extent to which current implementation of quality assurance practices has reached CSDCs.

For this study, the researcher focused on exploring essential elements in implementing quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices, especially in Community Skills Development Centres. The specific objectives were to:

1. Explore quality assurance strategies and procedures being implemented by TEVETA for Community Skills Development Centers
2. Identify how Community Skills Development Centers are managing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices
3. Identify gaps being faced by Community Skills Development Centers
4. Establish possible solutions or mitigation strategies towards the gaps identified by TEVETA and Community Skills Development Centers in the management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices

1.5 Main Research Question

The main research question of this study is:

What are the quality assurance enhancement practices and strategies of TEVET Community Skills Development Centres?

To be able to answer this question, it is important to consider the following sub-questions:

1. What are the quality assurance strategies and procedures put in place by TEVETA for Community Skills Development Centers?
2. How are Community Skills Development Centers managing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices?
3. What are the gaps that have been identified by Community Skills Development Centers?
4. What are the possible mitigation strategies towards the gaps identified at TEVETA and Community Skills Development Centers levels in the managing and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study aimed to critically analyze the essential elements of quality assurance mechanisms that are being implemented and managed by Community Skills Development Centres and at the same time hear from them of the possible solutions and mitigation strategies that can be followed or implemented from the gaps identified. In addition; this study aimed at also engaging TEVETA to help in identifying the challenges or gaps it is facing in managing and instilling or implementing the quality assurance mechanisms towards Community Skills Development Centres and also their suggested solutions towards these challenges. Upon analyzing the data collected from both parties; this study helped in synchronizing how best the TEVET institutions specifically Community Skills Development Centres and TEVETA can easily work hand in hand in ensuring that quality assurance mechanisms are being followed to produce graduates that are purpose fit for the socio-

economic development of the nation. Additionally; stakeholders, industries, and other TEVET players can adapt the findings to improve on the existing mechanisms that they have put in place.

1.7 The Rationale of the Study

The Malawian population being youthful and under 18 years of age; has a low enrolment percentage at both tertiary and formal vocational institutions. This has led to a low percentage in the employment sector as individuals do not have the right skills and qualifications and at the same time no qualifications for them to proceed to be enrolled to pursue tertiary education. Though that is the case opportunities are there for individuals who fall in this category to pursue their studies through vocational training by Community Skills Development Centres to also be part of the socio-economic development of the nation. Many of the TEVET providers are there absorbing individuals in this category in bulk but the majority of them offer services and certificates without being accredited by TEVETA; hence compromising the standards needed by the market at national and global level.

Those managing the TVET institutions are to benefit from this study by looking at how best they can implement the quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices by planning to overcome the challenges that have been identified during this study. This study also helps managers in understanding how quality assurance mechanisms can be implemented to effectively and efficiently benefit individuals, the nation, and the world at large.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study used the systems theory and was complemented by the Total Quality Management (TQM) model. The systems theory aims to explicate relationships and interdependence between components of the system and the organization; thus a system is established based on the structure and patterns of the relationships emerging from interactions among components hence making each system different from the other (Lai & Huili, 2017). Components of each system are structured in hierarchical ordering and components are interdependent with one another in the system to the extent that one component cannot function without the support of other components. TVET quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices cannot fully function without having inputs that will produce outputs and both are also dependent on the two-way feedback loop to ensure that necessary changes are made.

The work by Beer (1972) gave a strong impulse to systems theory particularly the viable systems model which was also the best fit in this study. The Viable Systems model outlines a system as an entity that is adaptable to survive in its changing environment; it is an abstract cybernetic description that applies to autonomous organizations (Mele, Pels & Polese 2010). Mele et al (2010) state that cybernetics represents an interdisciplinary study of the structure of regulatory systems, therefore, referring to the study of how actions by a system cause changes in the environment that are understood by the system itself in terms of feedback and allowing the adaptation of the system to new conditions. That is the same with the TVET quality assurance mechanism where both the inputs and outputs influence the environment by encouraging the development of a global more unitary consciousness, teamwork, collaboration, learning for life, and exposure to the universal storehouse of accumulated knowledge and wisdom.

To complement the systems theory; the Total Quality Management (TQM) has been merged to ensure that the institution can successfully implement all activities and handle all forms of resistance that may occur. TQM's philosophy dates back to the 1930s aiming at fostering a culture of quality in an organization involving all employees committed to achieving and maintaining high-quality standards (ETF, 2015).

This model requires wise leadership and an enabling organizational structure and culture; Deming the founder of this model conceptualized the quality cycle (plan, do, check, and review) as a systematic way of managing quality and provides steps for obtaining knowledge and essential learning for the continuous improvement of product development or process. The Systems Theory is there to manage all the changes that may occur through the feedback loops that have been put in place and the TQM ensures that though the change may come in; the quality of the procedures should not be negatively affected but maintained and improved. Hence it is important to note that the implementation of TQM is less focused on money and more on careful meticulous and focused planning based on the strategic vision and goals of the institution (Nasim, Iqbal & Khan, 2014).

This study also touched base with the quality it is therefore, important to focus on and link the TQM Model and systems thinking because in TQM the systemic conception of the firm is strengthened by its emphasis on the importance of the relationships of the parts to the goal to be reached (Mele & Colurcio, 2006) and the foundation of TQM correlates with the systems approach to quality management as it covers the entire organization, all people and all functions including external organizations and suppliers.

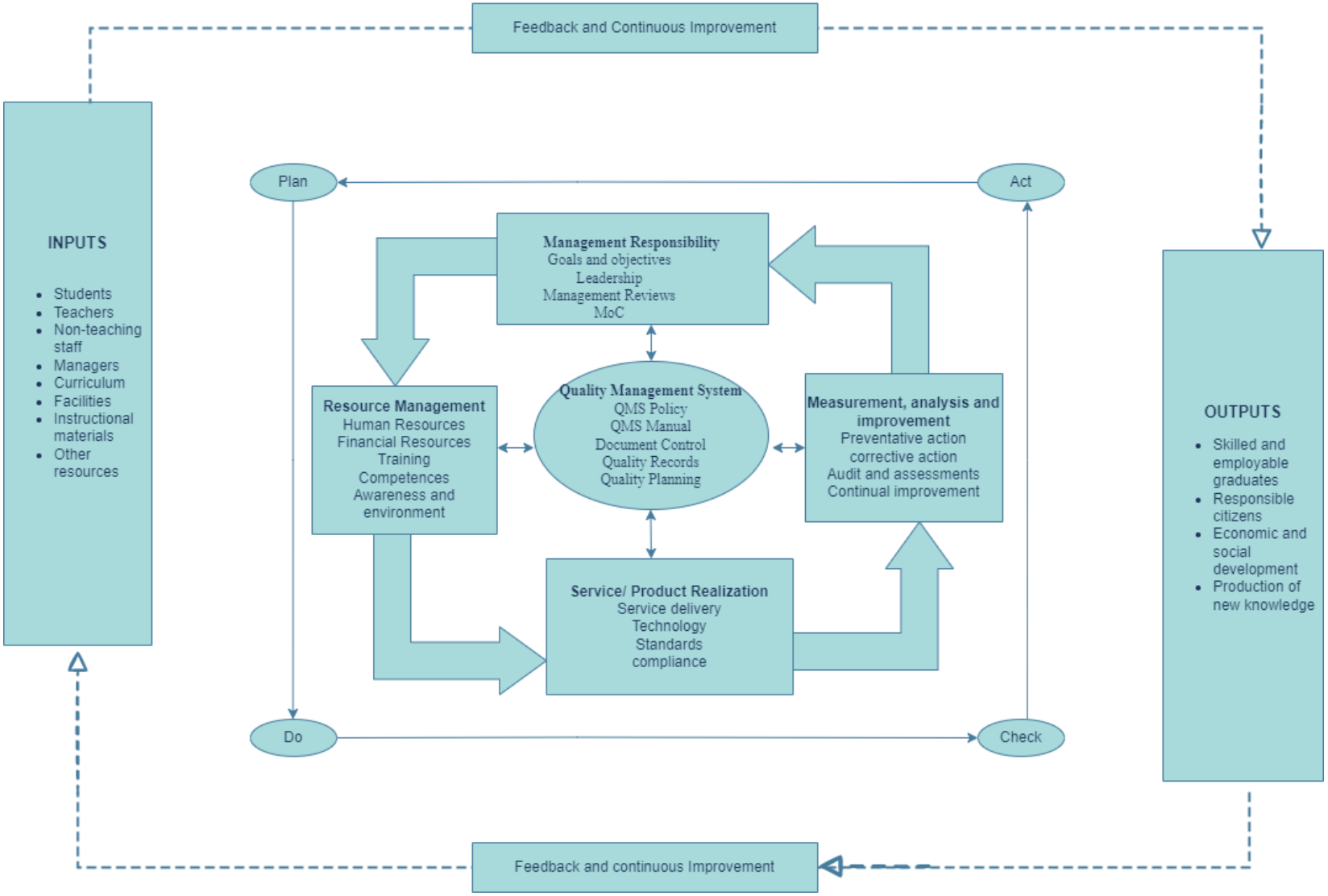

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework (Systems Theory and TQM Model adapted from Lai & Huili, 2017 and ETF, 2015)

1.9 Scope

The study will focus on a few selected Community Skills Development Centers in the three regions of Malawi and will specifically look at the implementation of quality assurance and enhancement practices that have been put in place by TEVETA.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter focused on giving an introductory overview of TVET education and its main purpose and contribution to the world at large. The overview gave an affirmation of the greater role TVET education plays ranging from the socio-economic development of the nation to pinpointing the discrepancy seen by other countries to be lacking behind when it comes to quality assurance mechanisms. TVET education in Malawi was narrowed down and contextualized by giving the current status and an introduction of CSDCs. This outline showed the gap that is there where no records are evident to show if CSDCs are implementing quality assurance and enhancement practices. The importance of this study was seen to contribute to amplifying and ensuring managers have the right strategies when it comes to quality assurance and enhancement practices.

Additionally, the chapter outlined the main objective which focused on exploring essential elements in implementing quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices. The specific objectives were to explore quality assurance strategies and procedures being implemented by TEVETA for CSDCs, identify how CSDCs are managing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices, identify gaps being faced by CSDCs, and establish possible solutions and mitigation strategies towards the identified gaps in the management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices. In conclusion, the chapter was summarized with the theoretical framework that was merged with the systems theory and the TQM model.

1.11 Thesis Outline

Chapter One gives an overview of the study by outlining key elements that are giving the background. Apart from the background overview, this chapter is comprised of a statement of the problem, research questions, research purpose, objectives, rationale of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, and scope.

Chapter Two is crucial in giving an outline of the literature reviewed beginning at a global, regional, and national level. Furthermore, this chapter delves deeper into bringing out an understanding of quality assurance and enhancement practices.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology and design used in the study which is not limited to the research approach, study population, sampling technique, sample size, data collection, data quality control, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six highlight the findings and discussions of the study which have been derived from the interpretation and analysis of data. The findings have been outlined under each objective ranging from quality assurance and procedures, management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms, quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices gaps, and mitigation strategies in management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices. The discussions of the discussions have been linked to literature and document analysis. Finally, Chapter Six outlines the conclusion and recommendations of the study and stipulates areas for further studies.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section of the literature review gives a brief context of where TVET and issues of quality assurance in general are originating from and at the same time an overview of what TVET is all about at the regional level and in Malawi. After that overview; then delve into the components of quality and quality assurance, how they have been incorporated into the TVET system, and the gaps and proposed solutions in resolving the gaps identified.

2.2 TVET in the Global World

Technical, Vocational, and Education Training (TVET) is considered to be the strong driving force for the socio-economic development of any nation. Chinyere, Ayonmike, Chukwumaijem, Okwelle, and Okeke (2015) state that to achieve this component in any nation; quality in vocational education is a tool and the driving force of an improved product hence the requirement of having set quality assurance mechanisms to be followed by TVET institutions. Quality assurance is considered to be an ongoing and crucial process to produce qualitative human capital for the nation's sustainable development growth. Hence vocational education should be viewed holistically from program entry requirements, duration and quality, the number of trainers, facilities, grading system, exam question items, supervision, and moderation (Malechwanzi, 2020 & ILO, 2015).

All these components are therefore hinged on systematic monitoring through planning, analysis, and control. Though these are the requirements; challenges met in the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms include but are not limited to poor funding, poor teaching methods, and poor assessment techniques for students. Additionally, possible strategies to

overcome the challenges include the provision of required facilities, adequate internal and external supervision, and partnership of both private and public stakeholders.

After a period of neglect, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is now firmly on the agenda of governments around the world as youth unemployment, social exclusion, and poverty have led many decision-makers to refocus their attention on providing skills development opportunities that respond to evolving social and economic demands (King, 2011). King (2011) further states that far from being the weakest link in education systems, TVET is evolving as a cornerstone for the transformation of education and training. Additionally, the development of skills through TVET is now one of the most often-cited priorities by ministers of education in both developing and developed countries and in recent years UNESCO as a whole, and many countries, have adopted strategies for TVET.

TVET cuts across every sector of the economy and relies on effective dialogue and interaction between education and training providers, and labor market stakeholders including employers, worker representatives, and other stakeholders. In addition, TVET is expected to contribute towards a wide range of (sometimes contradictory) socioeconomic goals, including full employment, increased productivity and competitiveness, social cohesion, equity, and sustainability (ILO, 2018). Unfortunately, King (2011) pointed out that too many young people and adults continue to lack access to learning opportunities, cannot find decent work, or have jobs that under-utilize their competencies therefore many people are living in poverty and face huge challenges in accessing the skills needed for healthy and productive lives.

ILO (2018) states that from the late 1980s onwards several governments began to place increasing emphasis on the role of education in preparing learners effectively for the world of

work. This school of thought, termed ‘new vocationalism’, placed the skills needs of industry at the center of discussions on the purpose of public education. TVET and skills development were thus viewed as an important component in promoting economic growth in general and addressing youth unemployment in particular. At the center of the argument was the view that most general education systems had not been effective in developing the skills that many young people needed to secure employment in the industry. The late 1980s and early 1990s thus saw the introduction and expansion of new vocational curricula and courses, often developed in collaboration with industry, and an increase in the variety of work-based learning routes on offer to young people.

While some of these reforms achieved successes, the core policy challenge of ensuring that TVET and skills development consistently supplied people with the skills required for economic growth in the right quantity at the right time, remained largely elusive. In a continued effort to overcome these challenges, roughly since 2007, policy interventions by governments across the world to improve the status and relevance of TVET have coalesced around a group of common intervention areas (McGrath, 2012; Marope, Chakrom & Holmes., 2015).

2.3 TVET in Sub – Saharan Africa

Some private providers issue certificates and diplomas that are not calibrated with national standards. Such fragmented delivery structures of TVET in Africa pose important implications for the quality of training, standards, and comparability of qualifications (certificates) issued (UNESCO, 2019). The multiplicity of qualifications and professional certificates, many of which are of dubious quality, undermines the image of TVET.

In almost all countries, TVET delivery outside the government is high and increasing in terms of the number of both institutions and learners. This trend is related to the fact that private providers give training for the informal sector, which is the more rapidly expanding labor market throughout Africa, while public institutions train mainly for the formal industrial sector, which is growing at a much slower rate (Bateman et al, 2012). It is therefore imperative that this delivery structure is fully accounted for in the national labor and human resource development policy and programming, to optimize returns and ensuring quality. Where-as self-regulation is important, it is necessary to establish mutually beneficial links with public systems for quality assurance, human resource planning, and innovation.

The quality of training is related to the issue of skills mismatch. In general, the provision of TVET places too much emphasis on theory and certification rather than on skills acquisition and aptitude tests. Inadequate training in instructors, obsolete training equipment, and lack of training materials are some of the common factors that combine to reduce the effectiveness of the training to meet the objectives of knowledge and skills required by labor market standards (Chimpolo, 2013).

The poor quality and inefficiency of training have led to a situation where the labor market looks outside the country for skills. As a result, external expertise is imported into the continent whereas they could be produced locally. The consequence is an increasingly frustrating net loss of new jobs for local Africans.

2.4 TVET in Malawi

The introduction of the concept of Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education Training (TEVET) in the TEVET Act of 1999 in Malawi aimed at re-orienting training to the needs of the labor market. It was connected with the political will to broaden public attention to the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal, and informal vocational learning and to create mechanisms for integration and effective coordination of the different TEVET subsystems (World Bank, 2010). The TEVET Authority is a regulatory body that was established in 1999 by an Act of Parliament. It was founded to operate as an independent and autonomous body mandated to create an integrated TEVET system in Malawi that is demand-driven, competence-based, modular, comprehensive, accessible, flexible, and consolidated enough to service both the rural and urban Malawian population (TEVETA Strategic Plan, 2018).

Additionally, the strategic plan states that the major purpose of the TEVET Authority is to contribute to human resource development through sustainable skills training and development to spearhead the country's production and export-led socio-economic growth. The latter has been explicated and supported in the Malawi 2063 Vision as it guarantees the provision and accessibility of quality education, skills development, and decent work opportunities mostly for the youth to maximize their contribution to sustainable economic development. However; though the TEVETA Act had stipulated its goals it has been a challenge to fulfill them over the years hence the need to fully implement the quality assurance mechanisms that have been put in place and also revise the things that are not working.

Industry representatives in the UNESCO (2019) report cited challenges affecting the quality of TEVET in Malawi including availability and capacity of teaching and instructional staff, availability of learning resources, work placement capacity, and infrastructure and resource

levels at TEVET provider institutions. Furthermore, a long-term complaint was raised by industry representatives stating that TEVET graduates do not have the type and level of skills that are needed in the job market as the delivery itself has become more theoretical than practical hence making it an undesirable trend. These connotations have at some point led to the thoughts of undermining TVET education and making it a last resort to individuals because of the poor quality it has due to less implementation of quality assurance mechanisms being implemented by TVET institutions.

2.5 Quality

Quality is deliberated to be the most important concept in educational terminology and thus said to be reflected on as the ability or degree with which a product, service, or phenomenon conforms to an established standard which makes it to be superior to the other, it can also be denoted to not only just be a feature of a finished product or services but involves a focus on internal processes and outputs which includes the reduction of waste and the improvement of productivity (Zelvys, 2004; Adegbesan, 2011).

According to Adegbesan (2010), quality is not just a feature of a finished product or service but involves a focus on internal processes and outputs which includes; the reduction of waste and the improvement of productivity. Similarly, Oyebade, Oladpo, and Adetoro (2012) opined that quality in education may be considered based on how good and efficient the teachers are; how adequate and accessible the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning are; and how prepared the graduates are for meeting the challenges of life and for solving the social problems.

2.5.1 ***Quality Assurance***

The essence of Quality Assurance is to enhance the effectiveness of the education system towards achieving set standards (Onyesom & Ashibogwu, 2013), and ETF (2012) concurs by stating that with specific application to TVET quality assurance in the learning environment provides policy-makers with a deeper understanding of vocational education, its functions, set goals, and key characteristics. When applied in this way the TVET institutions can easily adopt, adapt and implement all necessary and new developments that are happening to improve the outputs as desired by the nation and global market.

Conceptually, quality assurance refers to performance measures designed by the authorities for assessing the performance of educational institutions to ensure that the learning outcomes meet the needs of each society (Igborgbor, 2012; Onyesom &Ashibogwu, 2013). ETF (2015) defines VET quality assurance as the composite measures established to verify that processes and procedures are in place which when effective ensure the quality and quality improvement of VET. Quality assurance within the TEVETA policy represents a tool that enables policymakers to be able to determine national educational needs that come about due to revised policies and strategies and at the same time the effectiveness focuses on critical elements such as access or participation, funding, relevance and quality of TVET (King, 2011; RECOUP, 2011).

To ensure quality in TVET, it is essential to establish quality assurance (QA) frameworks applying to all aspects of TVET. Globally, the focus today is on strengthening quality assurance at all levels. There is currently a strong move in many countries towards having a rigorous, internationally recognized TVET quality assurance process. Many countries have initiated steps for the establishment of quality assurance mechanisms keeping in view the provision of

TVET. This initiative is tied to the reforms in TVET sweeping round the globe (Kingombe,2011).

The findings of Idialu (2013) on the parameters for quality assurance in vocational education center on a precise overview of key pointers which if applied can acquire great results in TVET. Idialu (2013) first looks at the quality of trainers which do have a great impact on the assessment of quality in the TVET institutions. The author further suggests that the trainers need to be adequately qualified for the job of imparting knowledge and must be equipped with the principles and practices of vocational education. In other instances, there is an intent focus on the trainer's qualifications, experiences, competencies, capacities, and acquisition of desirable skills to carry out certain tasks.

Chinyere et al (2015) concur with Idialu (2013) by proposing that trainers should undergo training and retraining to ensure that they are highly qualified and up to date with methodologies in TVET delivery. Additionally, Chinyere et al (2015) advocates for adequate provision towards scholarship and grants for TVET trainers. Suggestions from these authors demonstrate the gap that is there with the trainers in TVET institutions who might not be well qualified and in the end produce graduates that are not ideal for the market and industry hence affecting the socio-economic development of the nation. Chinyere et al (2015) guide on how the less qualified trainers can be handled to ensure this component of the quality assurance mechanism is implemented but as indicated by both authors there are inadequate funds that are being pumped into the TVET sector to ensure the training component of trainers to be tackled and in an overview funding to all input components in quality assurance mechanisms.

Adequate provision of instructional materials was raised by Chinyere et al (2015) as one of the strategies to ensure implementation of a quality assurance mechanism which Idialu (2013) added on for this component to be backed up with good teaching methods, adequate facilities to aid teaching and learning, equal learning opportunities for all students, provision of a conducive learning and communal assistance to students and teachers. In support of this component trained teachers will also attract quality of instruction; because there is quality of instruction, student output will also be of high productivity in the market or industry. Instructional quality is also possible with the support of both the government and key stakeholders who will ensure this is fulfilled because they are aware of the benefits it will bring.

Accreditation of programs is also one of the most important components as it gives uniformity of the output and it is also in line with current market trends. Idialu (2013) stresses accreditation or regulatory bodies that are existing but are different in each nation depending on the structures put in place. These bodies are required to set minimum standards to guide the operations of the systems. The author outlined that the bodies are responsible for the accreditation of courses and qualifications or certifications offered to students at the end of the program. These are issues that cannot be overlooked and are a must for them to be followed; for example, in Malawi, we have TEVETA and Trade Test that offer these services.

Inspection or monitoring is an ongoing process in quality assurance mechanisms and is viewed by Idialu (2013) to be an activity delegated to agencies who are assigned to carry out this task. Chinyere et al (2015) stress adequate internal and external supervision that has to take place frequently. Both these authors agree on these terms because this component ensures management teams in TVET institutions strive and meet the set standards. It is of paramount importance for TVET institutions to make it a habit of having internal quality assurance

mechanisms that they can follow as a preamble guideline to the external quality assurance mechanism. This element will or can be very helpful because it will turn out to be something that is already internally built and no compliance issues can be filed.

An evaluation was also a point stated by Idialu (2013) where she states that this component involves learner user surveys, internal and external appraisals, validation, moderation procedure, input process, and output for accessing quality. Data collected from all these components will give feedback on how quality assurance mechanisms are being managed and implemented; if need be learning from the feedback is the most crucial aspect as TVET institutions can work on their weaknesses and continue on the strengths identified. From these evaluations; other TVET institutions can be able to learn and work on their existing mechanisms most especially internal quality assurance mechanisms.

Malawi has a national TVET system that mostly consists of the government TVET training providers therefore quality assurance is likely input based and managed through providers' internal mechanisms that concentrate upon the quality and standard of the training and assessment, the building infrastructure and equipment, and the training and experience of the teachers and instructors. Industry and privately owned TVET providers have a small control percentage but their focus on quality assurance is a mix of input mechanisms that relate to the capacities of the providers and output mechanisms related to the standards of the knowledge and skills that are acquired by the participants. To also ensure both internal and external quality assurance the TQM model has to play a role to ensure all stakeholders' needs are met.

Quality Assurance Mechanism

2.5.2 *Quality Assurance Mechanisms*

Bateman et al (2012) point out that quality assurance mechanisms should have a balance within these sets of characteristics so that they ensure:

- Probity and accountability for investments in TVET, and minimum standards for the delivery and outcomes; but at the same time encouraging quality improvement and innovation;
- Quality and relevance of the TVET product in the form of educational and/or competency standards and provider capacity; as well as
- Quality of the TVET product in the form of the relevance and level of the knowledge and skill outcomes of the graduates.

Additionally, it is important to note that quality assurance of different elements of TVET includes:

- The TVET product through the accreditation of achievement standards (such as educational and/or competency standards as well as certification of a qualification);
- The training providers through registration processes based upon their infrastructure, financial probity and health, staff qualifications and experience, management systems, delivery systems, and student support systems;
- The TVET processes through the auditing of provider processes and outcomes, including student learning and employment outcomes and student and user satisfaction levels;
- The TVET outcomes through control, supervision, or monitoring of assessment and graduation procedures and outcomes;

- Provider or system-wide evaluations of TVET quality, including evaluations by external agencies; and
- The provision of public information on the performance of providers such as program and component completions, and student and employer satisfaction.

Malawi has a national TVET system that mostly consists of the government TVET training providers therefore quality assurance is likely input based and managed through providers' internal mechanisms that concentrate upon the quality and standard of the training and assessment, the building infrastructure and equipment, and the training and experience of the teachers and instructors. Industry and privately owned TVET providers have a small control percentage but their focus on quality assurance is a mixer of input mechanisms that relate to the capacities of the providers and output mechanisms related to the standards of the knowledge and skills that are acquired by the participants. To also ensure both internal and external quality assurance the TQM model has to play a role to ensure all stakeholders' needs are met.

No one formula is there for the development of a quality assurance system because contexts differ (Desideri et.al, 2013), however key components are there to outline important aspects. These include;

- Processes for the construction of TVET qualifications and standards, including completion rules for the qualification;
- Clear processes for registration and monitoring of providers, as well as a system for moderating and/or validating assessment, and for the awarding of qualifications; and
- Establishment and governance of agency or agencies for maintaining the quality assurance of qualifications, developing standards, and accrediting providers.

2.5.3 ***Quality enhancement***

Quality enhancement according to Harvey in the Analytic Quality Glossary (2004-2016) states that it is a process of augmentation or improvement. While the UK QAA (2017) defines quality enhancement as using evidence to plan, implement and evaluate deliberate steps intended to improve the student learning experience or an aspect of institutional quality management that is designed to secure, in the context of the constraints within which individual institutions operate, steady, reliable and demonstrable improvements in the quality of learning opportunities.

Williams (2016) states quality enhancement practices have two strands of which the first falls on the enhancement of individual learners which is the improvement of learners' attributes, knowledge, ability, skills, and potential. While the second component falls on the improvement in the quality of an institution or program of study. Therefore Elassy (2015) posited that quality assurance and quality enhancement are dependent on quality assurance. This implies the need for good quality assurance data in TVET that will later inform enhancement and probably state that the two are an integral part of the process.

2.6 Conclusion

Evaluating and critiquing the literature has given an overview of what the missing elements are in the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in TVET institutions and from the recommendations that have been given which not only include government and stakeholders to play their role in supporting, partnering, and financing these institutions. Analyzing the findings from the literature; all the gaps and modification strategies have one common factor for the smooth running of the quality assurance mechanisms which is finances. If adequate

finances are allocated to the TVET sector or institutions majority of the mechanisms will run and be managed with ease.

Additionally, the literature has shown and struck a great balance in quality assurance mechanisms where the characteristics are ensuring probity and accountability of the investments in TVET intending to have minimum standards for the delivery and outcomes at the same time encouraging quality improvement and innovation through enhancement practices. Furthermore, the quality and relevance of the TVET product in the form of educational and or competence standards and provider capacity as well as the quality of the TVET product in the form of the relevance and level of the knowledge and skill outcomes of graduates.

That being the case the major gap that has been discovered is that the literature is just focused on TVET institutions in general therefore leaving a gap and having limited information on how Community Skills Development Centers implement quality assurance mechanisms by also specifically looking at their gaps and proposed strategies to resolve the issue that they face as they implement quality assurance mechanisms. The literature on quality assurance shows a focus on TVET institutions at large but does not narrow down how Community Skills Development Centres are faring. This study has therefore filled in the gap of exploring the essential elements in CSDCs as they are implementing quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices.

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the design of the study and discusses the research philosophy, approach, and strategy on which the study was centered. This has been followed by a description of the population under the study, population sampling, data collection techniques, and data analysis. The research design and methodology were uniquely structured to facilitate the study's focus on quality assurance and enhancement practices in CSDCs. The study, therefore, relied much on the qualitative measuring approach where in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals who are well knowledgeable in the CSDCs sector and when it comes to quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices to collect rich and purpose-fit data.

3.2 Research Methodology

Research methodology is a structured set of elements that guide the researcher on what design, approach, and strategies to follow during the research to get valid and reliable results. The research methodology adopted in this study has been explained by the use of the Research Onion in Figure 3.1. Figure 3.1 gives an outline of the whole research methodology used in this study.

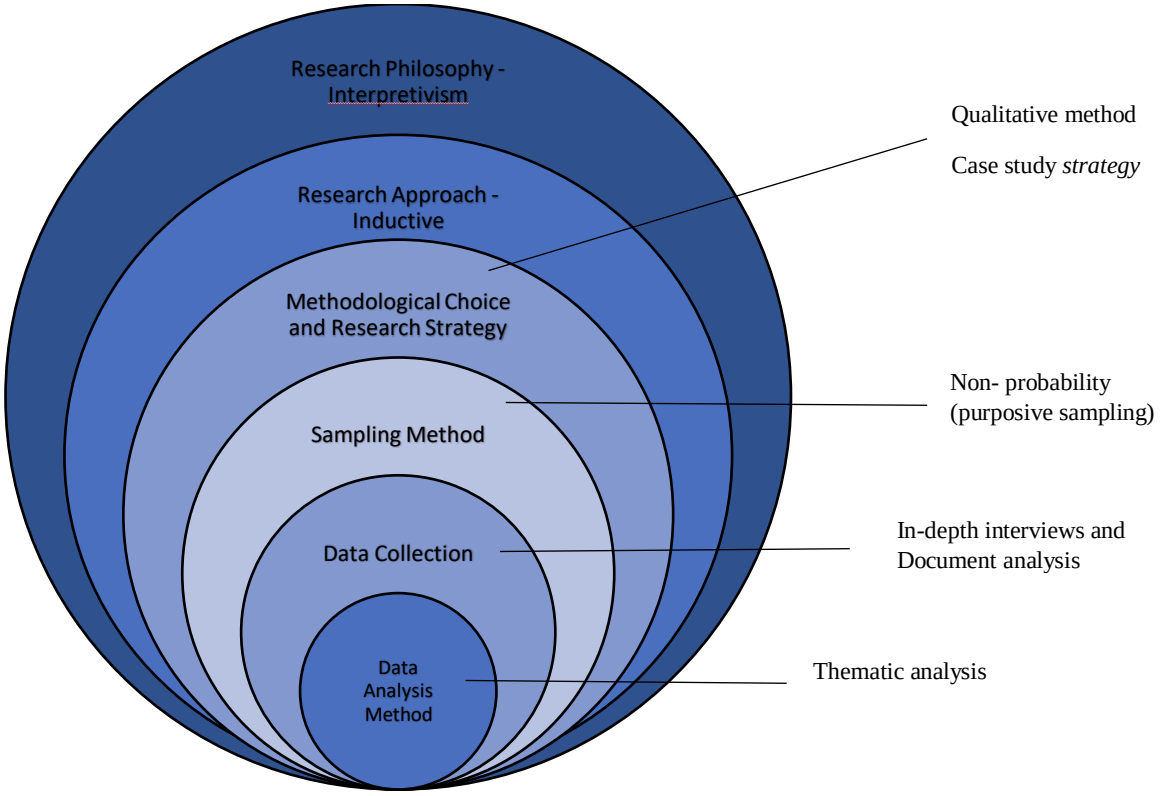

Figure 3.1 The research onion (Adapted from Saunders et al., 2019)

3.3 Research Design

Yin (2018) defines a research design to be a logical plan for getting the set of questions to be addressed and set some conclusions about the questions while Nachmias and Nachmias (2014) define research design as a logical model of proof. This study used the case study design of inquiry which usually evaluates and the researcher developed an in-depth analysis of a case often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2014). Yin (2012) states that cases are bounded by time and activity and the researcher collects detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period. This approach helped in getting the managers' views to explicitly express the challenges they face as they implement the quality assurance mechanisms and them being at the forefront of implementation and also proposed possible solutions to the challenges they face.

3.4 Research Approach

The research used the qualitative approach which has been defined by Creswell (2014) as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This approach involved emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively built from particulars to general themes and the researcher made interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014). The study also followed the interpretivism paradigm which is seen as an approach to qualitative research. The researcher focused on and sought an understanding of the individuals' developed subjective meanings of their experiences which these meanings were varied and multiple. This led the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas (Creswell, 2014). Choosing this paradigm helped in clearly understanding the respondent's views and explanations which were influenced by their environment.

3.5 Study Population

A population is a collection of all the elements a researcher is studying and about which s/he is trying to conclude (Best & Kahn, 2006). There are 61 Community Skills Development Centres nationwide; having 25 in the northern region, 12 in the central region, and 24 in the southern region. For this study, 3 CSDCs were selected one from each region. Additionally, TEVETA headquarters, the 3 Regional TEVETA offices, and the Ministry of Labor also participated in the data collection to ensure all components on issues of quality assurance and enhancement practices were critically tackled.

3.6 Sampling Technique

Sampling is employed to provide a general picture and representation of the characteristics of the population (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010). Sampling is conducted with the purpose to represent the characteristics of the population on the problem (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010) without having to include the whole population in the study. According to Weiss (1998), sampling could be random or non-random. The researcher used both sampling methods in the study.

Having established the population – TVET – the researcher used purposive, non-random sampling to select a case as the focus of the study for CSDCs. The regulatory body that is TEVETA was purposively selected because they are responsible for the regulation of quality assurance systems in TVET institutions in Malawi hence making its officials knowledgeable on issues of quality assurance and enhancement practices particularly in CSDCs. The three CSDCs were randomly selected for each region through random numbers that were generated in Excel. The selection for the CSDCs was more than one as the researcher targeted to collect rich, comprehensive, and robust data on quality assurance and enhancement practices of CSDCs in Malawi.

The study adopted a purposive sampling technique which enabled the researcher to select participants who were conversant with Quality Assurance systems, and who were also able to provide the relevant information that addressed the purpose and research questions of the study (Babbie and Mouton, 2012; McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). In support of this notion, De Vos et al., (2005) provide that the purposive sampling for a study should be made up of the academic staff and those in management since they possess the most typical attributes of the population.

With non-probability sampling, purposive sampling was used to select members of management and academic staff who were knowledgeable about quality. The objective of sampling was to provide a practical means of enabling the data collection and processing components of research to be carried out whilst ensuring that the sample provides a good representation of the population. A good representation of the population was reached through the saturation point and as stated by Creswell (2013) a modest sample size is required in qualitative by producing data saturation.

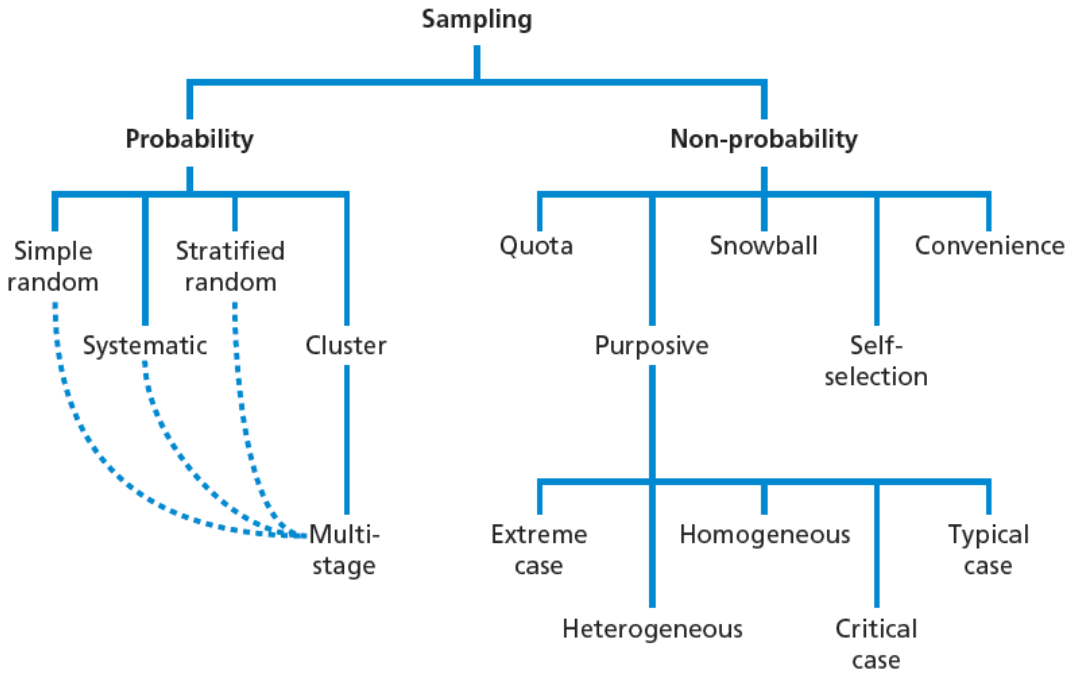

Figure 2.2 Sampling techniques (As adapted from Saunders et al., 2019)

3.7 Sample Size

The study involved participants from the management team of CSDCs, the TEVETA quality assurance management team, the academic staff from the CSDCs, the Quality Assurance Manager at the Ministry of Labor, and the CSDC Quality Assurance Chair.

Interviews were conducted at TEVETA, 3 Community Skills Development Centers (one in each region), and the Ministry of Labor. The interviews focused on management staff in quality assurance departments from both TEVETA and the Ministry of Labor having a total of 4 participants in this category. A total of 16 participants were interviewed from the Community Skills Development Centers; having 5 participants purely in the management category, 9 participants purely academic staff, and 2 participants who were both in the management and academic staff category. Overall; a total of 11 management participants and 9 academic staff took part in the interviews. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 give a summary of how participants were sampled and the participants that took part in the interviews.

Table 3.1: Participants Sampled

S/N	**Category of participants**	**Population size**	**Population sample**	**Sampling technique**	**Sampling type**
1	The management team at CSDCs	12	6	Non-probability	Purposive sampling
2	The management team at TEVETA	6	3	Non-probability	Purposive sampling
3	Academic staff	36	9	Non-probability	Purposive sampling
4	The QA manager at the Ministry of Labor	1	1	Non-probability	Purposive sampling
5	CSDC QA Chair	1	1	Non-probability	Purposive sampling

Table 3.2 Interviewed Participants

Category	Managers	Academic	Mix
CSDC 1	2	3	
CSDC 2	2	3	
CSDC 3		3	2
CSDC QA Chair	1		
Ministry of Labor	1		
TEVETA	3		
TOTAL	**9**	**9**	**2**
Overall Total	**11**	**9**	
Interviewed	**20**		

3.8 Data Collection Instruments

Qualitative Data was collected through three data collection tools (see Annex V) which were subdivided under the CSDCs management staff questionnaire, CSDCs academic staff, and TEVETA management staff were both management from TEVETA and Ministry of Labor where interviewed with. These questionnaires were administered to assess the quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices for CSDCs. Apart from these questionnaires, a document analysis checklist form was also used to assess and verify the compliance of set standards that have been put in place by TEVETA and the developed internal quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices.

The questionnaires and checklist were first piloted at CSDC X to establish the reliability of the study data collection tools, however, CSDC X was not included in the study. To ensure the questionnaire and checklist were fit to proceed with the main data collection, the researcher

was able to interview 3 academic staff and 2 managers at the institution of which later on necessary changes were made to produce valid and reliable instruments.

3.9 Data Collection

3.9.1 *In-depth Interviews*

To allow for the researcher to probe and uncover detailed explanations from various participants, the study employed an in-depth interview technique (see annex V for interview guides). As recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2016), a tape recorder was employed in this activity to not miss some issues during the interviews. The in-depth interviews were conducted with management and academic staff in TVET institutions.

The researcher described the purpose of the study to the participants, explaining that they were not compelled to participate in the study. The selection of the study sample employed a purposive technique which included participants' knowledge of issues of teaching, learning, and general administration of the institutions. Therefore, the main participants of the study included management and academic staff.

3.9.2 *Document analysis*

Document analysis defined by Bowen (2009) is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning to an assessment topic. Bowen further argues that document analysis is an integral tool in its own right and it is an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation as a combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon.

In this study, the researcher looked at both internal and external quality assurance mechanism strategies, monitoring forms, evaluation and recommendation forms, and suggestion or feedback documentation. These documents were not limited to module packages, lesson plans, schemes of work, financial templates and liquidation documentation, students attendance registers, and student grade records These documents were crucial to the study because they determined the effectiveness and flagged out challenges being faced in the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices.

3.10 Data Quality Control

Lincoln and Guba (2013) argue that ensuing credibility is one of the other most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. The researcher, therefore, maintained trustworthiness by; carefully choosing documents that were relevant to the study, carefully designing the interview questions to get the perspective of the participants, used interviews as a complement to documents analyzed, used data collection methods and sources to ensure consistency of findings, carefully selected participants who met the criteria for participation in the study, had an adequate period in the field to collect information-rich data and reported research findings in detailed narratives and easily understood tables.

To address and ensure there was data quality control the researcher made sure that multiple sources of information, evidence through literature, and having key informants review case studies and findings was used. Therefore the collected data was carefully reviewed and referred to avoid inconsistencies. Bearing in mind the insufficient population sample that participated in the study and that the results cannot be generalized; still the findings can stimulate further research since it presented vast views from both managers and academic staff and the findings can be replicated to other CSDCs.

Trustworthiness was obtained from the participants by first contacting and booking an appointment with them. In that same line, the researcher was able to send relevant documents (refer to annexes III and IV) for them to agree in participating in the study and prepare accordingly. During the interview sessions data was recorded, field notes were written down and observations were made through the document analysis checklist. Lastly, the researcher was able to compare the collected data with various sources for authentication and the transcribed data was shared with participants for verification.

3.11 Data Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data requires an understanding of how to make sense of text and images so that one can form answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2012). This process helped the researcher to clarify and explore concepts from the data hence using thematic analysis by firstly being tasked to transcribe the recordings from where categories, codes, and themes were extracted. As the data analysis unfolded, the researcher concurrently outlined themes that were summarised into research findings which were included in the report of the research results. In addition to this, the document analysis also helped to feed into the analysis and discussion of this study (triangulation) by looking at both the internal and external quality assurance mechanism strategies, monitoring forms, evaluation and recommendation forms, and suggestion or feedback documentation.

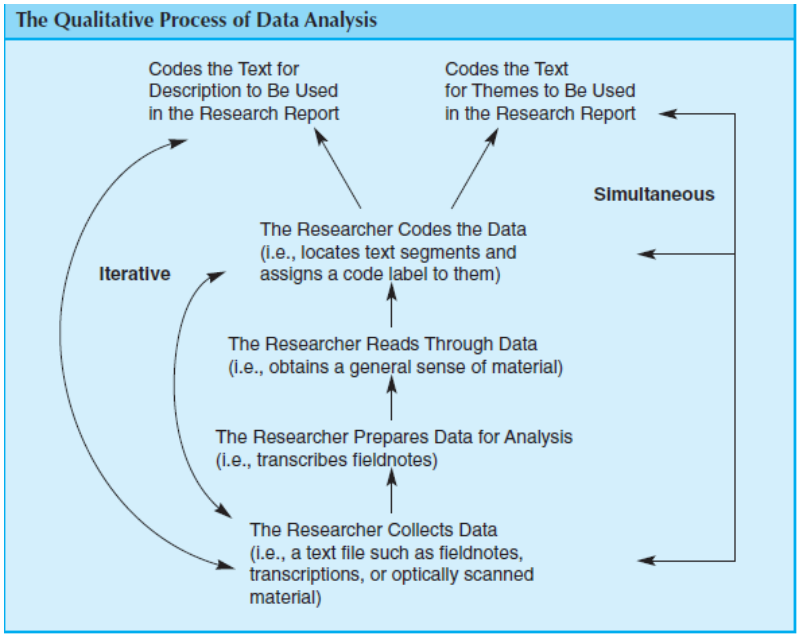

Figure 3.3 The qualitative process of data analysis (Creswell, 2012)

3.12 Ethical Consideration

The study was approved by Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC/DOR/22/45). Creswell (2012) outlines that the process involves seeking permission from the board to start by developing a description of the project, designing an informed consent form (see Annex II), and having the project reviewed.

3.12.1 ***Confidentiality***

Confidentiality pertains to the understanding between the researcher and participant that guarantees sensitive or private information will be handled with the utmost care (Bos, 2020). Participants were informed that the data collected was private and confidential during and even after, hence ethical practices were a must during this research.

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were preserved by not revealing their names and identity in the data collection, analysis, and reporting of the study findings. The

interview environments were also carefully managed by ensuring that the participants were in a safe space where they could freely and genuinely communicate.

3.12.2 ***Informed Consent***

After approval from the research body, permission to conduct the study at various CSDCs was sought from the Centre Managers. However, recommendations by Creswell (2012) ensured the researcher to obtain individual written permission from the participants to take part in the research and that the conversations were to be recorded.

Furthermore, Creswell (2012) proposes that this begins with the identification of some guidelines for ethical practices and then reviews key issues likely to arise such as informing participants of the purpose of the study, refraining from deceptive practices, sharing information with participants including your role as a researcher, being respectful of the research site, reciprocity, using ethical interview practices, maintaining confidentiality by not using actual names of participants and collaborating with participants (see annex IV). In addition to this, COVID-19 preventative measures were followed by observing physical distance, providing the participant with a mask where need be, and encouraging the use of hand sanitizer.

3.12.3 ***Privacy***

Privacy is an assurance that an individual gets by having the freedom to decide on the time and the extent to which private information has to be disclosed (Burn & Groove, 2011). Therefore, the researcher made sure participants were assured of anonymity in their participation as names were not used and they could also withdraw if they wished to at any point without being penalized.

3.13 Data Management

Research data management refers to the effective handling of information that is created in the course of research by covering the initial planning, day-to-day processes, and long-term archiving and sharing (Ingram, 2016). Ingram further states that effective data management is carried out for the entire lifecycle of data that is from the point of creation through to dissemination, publication, and archiving.

Therefore, the researcher stored and backed up all recordings and documents by uploading them on the laptop and backing them up on One Drive. All written and hard copy documents were converted to soft copies and the hard copies were labeled and sorted in files for easy identification.

3.14 Dissemination

Dissemination is defined by Wilson et al (2010) as a planned process that involves consideration of target audiences and the settings in which research findings are to be received and where appropriate, communicating and interacting with wider policy and service audiences in ways that will facilitate research uptake in decision-making processes and practices.

The researcher first shared the findings with all participants to validate and confirm if what was written reflected what they communicated during data collection. After this step, the researcher involved TEVETA by sharing the findings with them and sought permission for the findings to be published and shared with both Community Skills Development Centres and other stakeholders in the nation for effective and collaborative implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter gives a summary of the methodology and design of the study which acted as a road map to give direction in the data collection, analysis, and the compiled findings. The researcher fostered a research approach that would best facilitate the inquiry into the status of the current quality assurance strategies and enhancement practices in the Community Skills Development Centres. The qualitative approach was used to further distinguish the research design to harness the uniqueness to facilitate the most appropriate methodology.

The study is informed by the interpretivism philosophy by ensuring the flexibility and integral component of becoming one with the study. The study population comprised TEVETA officials from both the headquarters and the regional offices, CSDCs academic staff and managers, and the Ministry of Labour Quality Assurance Manager. The data collection tools included specific questionnaires for managers and academic staff and the complimentary document analysis checklist. The findings of the study provided crucial continuity and enrichment to the research process by also using triangulation through literature and document analysis.

CHAPTER 4 : FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices in CSDCs is key to TVET education and acts as a hub through which shortfalls can be addressed. This chapter will present the research findings of the data that was collected from the participants' mainly through interviews and supplemented by document analysis.

The purpose of this study was to focus on exploring the essential elements in implementing quality assurance enhancement practices and strategies specifically by TEVET Community Skills Development Centers. To acquire the responses, the researcher was obliged to use the following objectives: Explore quality assurance strategies and procedures being implemented by TEVETA for Community Skills Development Centers, identify how Community Skills Development Centers are managing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms, identify gaps being faced by Community Skills Development Centers and establish possible solutions or mitigation strategies towards the gaps identified by TEVETA and Community Skills Development Centers in the management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms.

4.2 Findings

This section of the chapter will look into the guiding questions (see Annex V) that were extracted from each of the objectives in this study. The researcher will outline the findings from each objective regarding the guiding questions.

4.2.1 ***Quality assurance and procedures***

Under the first objective; the researcher used the following guiding questions from where findings were extracted. The researcher's set guiding questions under this objective helped to gauge or get a summative overview of the roles and responsibilities of both the management team at TEVETA and CSDCs. These questions brought in a component to explore the quality assurance strategies and procedures that are followed in line with their daily duties. For instance, the management at the TEVETA level showed to focus and oversee enforcing compliance and adherence through the Standards Development Unit.

Through the document analysis checklist the department showed to have excellent documentation in how knowledge should be transferred and measured to ensure quality assurance and enhancement practices are adhered. The evidence was shown in the curriculum that they have through the different modules on the different trades, a guideline on the minimum training standards and uniform guidelines on how delivery needs to take place. This Unit was said by Participant F1 to focus on

> *". . .the development of training standards (curriculum) by putting down the training standards, qualifications, content and how it has to be delivered and putting together instructional materials.*"

This was supported by Participant A1 who stated,

> "I *make sure that the services that the instructors are delivering to the students should be of proper quality and the materials used when doing the training*

should be the right materials for the different training they are conducting,"

These sentiments fully support and show the flow of duties from the mother body to the implementing CSDCs. Apart from this, Participant A2 also acknowledged the role of ensuring that there is teacher support, especially in the teaching methodologies as the trainers deliver the sessions. This was evident as records of the right materials were recorded in the consumables database and were clearly linked to the lesson plans.

TEVETA management also showed the role they have in providing funding for the CSDCs to implement the training which is followed by the right procurement procedures and financial management and reporting by the CSDC's management to ensure that the resources are rightfully spent. Participant A4 stated,

"*I am responsible for the provision of necessary teaching materials to trainers*"

This is done after the right procurement procedures have been followed for example, purchasing from certified dealers, purchase of high-quality/ original materials, and ensuring the right documentation is in place for reporting purposes. The financial records in the institutions showed records of incoming funds and proper records of receipts for the goods that have been purchased.

This was followed by other guiding questions that mainly focused on finding out the monitoring and evaluation of CSDCs by mainly looking at the mechanisms that have been put in place, the responsible person and the intervals this monitoring and evaluation takes place at the external level. The researcher asked these questions to find out how the CSDCs monitor

and evaluate the quality assurance mechanisms and to clarify who is involved in the same. Inspection or monitoring is an ongoing process in quality assurance mechanisms. Therefore, the researcher discovered that CSDCs play a role in conducting internal quality reviews which involve them compiling reports that are handed over to TEVETA officials as part of the external monitoring.

The internal monitoring informs the external monitoring and CSDCs registered during the interviews that they have peer classroom session visits from where the trainers evaluate their fellow trainers on how they are delivering the training and also monitor if they are following the curriculum in line with the module packages. A compiled file of all the peer classroom visits was seen and appreciated and it was accompanied by a schedule of this ongoing activity.

The researcher also found out that CSDCs are also given checklists that are accompanied as the trainer delivers the sessions with the focus of recording student progress on the content that is being delivered. This checklist is handed over to the TEVETA personnel who comes to monitor and it is used in assessing and verifying if the students have been well-rated by the trainer. The researcher had an opportunity to appreciate how the students records were rated in frequency and also per lesson.

All the funding that comes in from TEVETA is well managed by using all the financial management tools they provide. These are monitored through the existence of procurement committees that evaluate quotations and ensure accountability of receipts and financial reports. A financial file was available at the CSDCs and they had a simple but efficient payment voucher with all supporting documents intact. These compiled reports are reviewed by the audit

team from TEVETA who gives the final assurance that the funds were appropriately used. Participant F4 clarified by stating,

> "*We also have a finance team that goes into the colleges to establish how the subsidy was utilized and the subsidy is a quality issue because if we have not paid the college the training materials then training would be taught theoretically.*"

The duration of the training in CSDCs is scheduled to run for either 4 to 6 months out of which independent external verifiers visit twice or thrice depending on their schedule and availability. The first visit is done at the very beginning of the session to conduct a head counting exercise, this is followed by monitoring of training delivery to ensure standards are met and lastly followed by a verification exercise where students are evaluated on the knowledge they have acquired. At times these last two visits were said to be combined. This was supported by Participant F3 who stated,

> "*Remember I said we are responsible for assessment and certification in the informal sector; so for us to be informed of the delivery we carry out monitoring of training delivery so most of the training intervention take place from four to six months so we ensure that we at least should carry out two monitoring visits and the third one is the one we carry out head counting to check who has reported then we carry the monitoring of training delivery to ensure that the delivery is according to our standards."*

The researcher also had a document analysis checklist component of the questionnaire from where verification and checking of the availability of documents that are in existence at both the CSDCs and TEVETA. The existence of the documents either internally or externally helps maintain and implement the quality assurance mechanisms. As stipulated in these findings, these documents are evident in majority of the CSDCs and are playing a role in ensuring quality.

4.2.2 *Management and Implementation of quality assurance mechanisms*

Under the second object of the study, the researcher's focus dwelled much on finding out the management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms most especially at CSDCs. The guiding questions the researcher used to probe were key to bringing out the key roles each participant at the institution has to bring out the best by aligning themselves to the quality assurance mechanisms that have been put in place.

The researcher asked these questions with the sole purpose of acquiring knowledge from the CSDC's participants if they are well aware of the mechanisms that they are required to follow from TEVETA as the regulatory body. The participants outlined the first tool of following the module as they teach or deliver the content to their students. In connection to this, they added that for the delivery of the content to be of the standard they require the use and provision of the right materials to produce high-quality products. For instance, Participant A3 stated,

> "*TEVETA just provides the module package and as a trainer, you follow that module package . . .*"

In concurrence, Participant B2 stated,

". . . I also ensure the right materials have been used to make sure we have quality products".

The use of a checklist from TEVETA was also mentioned to be used and this tool is there to help in monitoring the progress of the students as they progress with the module packages.

"*We usually have a checklist to monitor how the student is progressing*,"

The above was mentioned by Participant B1 who affirmed that this checklist is also essential for both the Principal and the TEVETA personnel to monitor each student's progress.

Apart from just trying to inquire about the knowledge and roles that the participants have on quality assurance mechanisms; the researcher made it a point to also find out from them the demarcation and understanding that the participants have on which are internal and which are external quality assurance mechanisms. This was an eye opener as the researcher asked these questions to see the interdependence that is there between the internal and external quality assurance mechanisms in CSDCs and to also deeply delve into the internal quality assurance processes to how they are managed and by who.

It was brought to the researcher's attention that depending on the institution; different intervals are followed when it comes to the monitoring of both internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. One of the commonly followed procedures is that of following the module package as the trainers deliver the sessions which is also accompanied by the use of the

checklist to monitor the students' progress. An internal assessment of the students is also done as said by Participant C3,

> *"I comply with the modules on how we are supposed to deliver the sessions and assess the students in line with the modules. Internally, there is a requirement to have a continuous assessment after each module has been delivered and we also have forms or templates that we fill in so that when verifiers from TEVETA come they check and confirm that we delivered and the students achieve."*

Internally, there is a schedule where trainers are allocated for example once a month to monitor their fellow trainers as they deliver, and at the end of it all, they get feedback on components they are supposed to improve on. Additionally, the Principals are tasked to do a daily and weekly follow-up on the content delivery from both the schemes of work and lesson plans by cross-checking if there is a match with the students' profiles. The Principal is also the leader who manages the funds that come in from TEVETA, the responsibility comes in to ensure that the right procedures are used when procuring materials and that there is the right documentation of every purchase that takes place. To beef up this element the Principal is required to come up with a good documentation or internal audit report of how the funds have been spent in line with the template that TEVETA provides.

In addition to the later; overview the researcher also conducted a document analysis checklist from where verification of the existence of the documents that were recorded in this section was done. Verification of these documents accounted for the structure of how monitoring is done in CSDCs. Evidently, the researcher was able to verify the peer classroom monitoring

record file, the financial documents, the trade modules, schemes of work, lesson plans, student attendance registers and student grades records.

Additionally the researcher went further to ask how the recommendations they receive are handled by the institutions. This was done to have a clear overview of how recommendations are handled by the CSDCs, especially those that come in after an evaluation has been done. This question was also posed to see the feedback loop that exists both internally and externally and on how best the feedback builds in quality assurance mechanisms. It came to the researcher's attention that recommendations come in after TEVETA personnel have visited the institution, some of the feedback is given right there, and then the other feedback is given after scrutiny by the TEVETA personnel. However Participant A4 expressed,

> "*This is a challenge because it takes a lot of time and sometimes the feedback doesn't come at all. We sometimes take an effort to follow up on them for example when external verifiers come we don't have feedback from them until we go to the office to just collect on our own because these reports help us to improve on what we are already doing well or not doing well. The recommendations given are looked into only for the things we can manage and that which is locally available."*

4.2.3 ***Quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices gaps***

Objective 3 focus was on identifying the challenges that are faced by CSDCs and the guiding questions looked at the immediate challenges that come as the institutions are implementing the external quality assurance mechanisms. The researcher asked this question to the CSDC's participants to get their views and how they evaluate the quality assurance mechanisms that

they have been oriented to follow. The participants pointed out issues to do with the core document that aligns them to acquire quality assurance which is the curriculum to undergo a review. They suggested the review because they said the content needs to align with the new technological world, the content needs to be contextualized and the content needs to be translated to our local language. Participant A4 agreed to this by stating,

> *". . . We take those who have passion for the skills hence we are forced to teach in vernacular language so that we should match with them. This becomes a challenge because the content we teach is in English hence a challenge for other students to grasp the skill because they might know it in terms of the foundational ground but for the person to explain the thing in theory terms becomes difficult."*

The same questions were probed on TEVETA participants to outline the challenges they face with CSDCs as they implement quality assurance mechanisms. The researcher asked the TEVETA management participants to identify the challenges they meet with CSDCs by outlining the shortfalls they have and to what extent these shortfalls lead to or if they are in line with the quality assurance or if there is any compromise. Participant F3 stated,

> "*The challenge is record keeping, this is because it is attributed to the nature of the trainees because we look at passion as the requirement regardless of the literacy levels. So we may find that one candidate is illiterate and doesn't know how to write or read. Now in that situation, the instructor or trainer will not have that urge to keep the records but we encourage them that when they have such type of trainees they should be able to transcribe the responses of those*

people and at least assign a mark on that assessment. So basically, the challenge that we have is seen in record keeping because what has not been written hasn't happened."

Further probing for more from the participants the researcher asked both the academic and management participants to outline some of the propositions they have when it comes to the quality assurance mechanisms that they think can be revised or upgraded to improve or change the current functionality of both the CSDC's and TEVETA's ways of handling quality assurance mechanisms. The gaps that were identified included poor record-keeping for the students' continuous assessment since some students do not know how to read or write therefore making it hard to capture their grades. The participants also outlined a gap in the post-program where no student is followed up or provided with a startup tool kit as elaborated by Participant F3 who outlined,

"*Some partners just deliver the training after graduation that's the end even in our mainstream programming we do not give tools because of financial constraints. The other intervention that we have come up with can support them after the training by linking them with financial institutions we have an MOU with NEEF and FINCA to give soft loans to our TEVET graduates where the interest is at 2% and 2.5% respectively."* Despite this development, the participant pointed out that, "*in terms of access we haven't done much despite the MOU NEEF and FINCA have their processes as well hence we haven't done much but we are planning to contact them so that we follow up on how best we can work with them."*

4.2.4 *Mitigation strategies in management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices*

For the last objective; the researcher looked forward to collecting constructive ideas from the participants on how best the aforementioned challenges can be worked on to improve the current quality assurance mechanisms. The researcher ensured that the responses were demarcated to either bring solutions to the internal or external improvement propositions. Apart from that the researcher thought it wise to capture new knowledge and ideas of how best the quality assurance mechanisms can be adhered to without any difficulties. There was a mention of the need for frequent visits by TEVETA officials as this always brings encouragement and timely knowledge acquisition of new developments that they need to adopt; this was supported by Participant B1 who said,

> "*The TEVETA visits should be frequent because of the new ideas and help that come promptly and it is exciting and encouraging to the trainers."*

Another proposition that was mentioned was the need for trainers to have a full-time contract at the institutions as this will ensure that they fully focus on training the students as they have job security. Participant B2 stated,

> "*We look for piece works so that we should source out additional resources as we are also conducting the training at the institution. But at the end of the day we tend to put more effort in the piece works unlike the training so we get to the institutions exhausted form the piece works hence affecting the session*".

The participant disclosed that there is a need to have full-time contracts or permanent employment as trainers so that they have an assurance of employment. If they have job security there is an assurance that they will be fully focused on teaching unlike having to focus on what their next steps should be in terms of thinking through what their next steps should be when it comes to providing for their needs. The introduction of full-time contracts can encourage the trainers and minimize divided attention and fully commit to class session delivery whose output lies on adhering to quality assurance.

Adding on to the mentioned propositions the participants stressed the need for adequate and timely funding from TEVETA. Funding was said to come in but it is not adequate and worse still comes very late which puts the institutions in a tight spot as they cannot stop the training sessions. This at the end of the day delays the progress of the practical component which is supposed to be the main method of delivering the module packages hence affecting the quality of delivery. Additionally, the inadequate funds lead the procurement committee to procure materials and equipment that are not of the required standards which at the end of the day affects the quality of the end product. However, one participant proposed and encouraged other funding sources that can be amplified by the institutions to cover up the shortfalls that they meet. For instance, an example was given for the institutions to amplify the right usage of commitment fees as they can be a source of income for the centers.

The participants outlined an issue of mindset change toward decision-making and timely response to the needs of the CSDCs. The participants voiced the need for TEVETA to hear their views of how things should be done and from there, the decisions made can be effective because there is a variety of ideas that have been brought up front. A concern was raised that

some of the changes brought in are made without their consultations which leads to the challenges and gaps that are being faced while adhering to the quality assurance mechanism.

4.3 Conclusion

The findings from this study have clearly shown the interlink between different components of quality assurance mechanisms in Community Skills Development Centers. The systems that have been put in place are evident and cannot do without the other. For instance, TEVETA is the governing body that oversees and gives guidance on how things should be done. A very good example would be the curriculum which has module packages that guide all trainers in how delivery should be done to the students.

In addition, the findings have shown that challenges that were cited affect the quality of TEVET in Malawi which include the availability and capacity of teaching and instructional staff, availability of learning resources, work placement capacity, and infrastructure and resource levels at TEVET provider institutions. Furthermore, a long-term complaint was raised by industry representatives stating that TEVET graduates do not have the type and level of skills that are needed in the job market as the delivery itself has become more theoretical than practical hence making it an undesirable trend.

Being a system the findings have outlined that change can be incorporated to improve and advance the current flow of things in line with the quality assurance mechanisms. From the data that has been collected from the existing components, adjustments can be easily made.

CHAPTER 5 : DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the analysis and discussions of the findings of the study that will be further elaborated in line with the objectives which will be streamlined with the emerging themes. The focus of this study is to "*Explore quality assurance and enhancement practices in Malawi's TEVET Institutions: A Case of Selected Community Skills Development Centers"*. As stipulated in Chapter 4 the study's focus is on the quality assurance and enhancement practices by Community Skills Development Centers that have been mandated by TEVETA as the TVET regulatory body in Malawi.

The themes under discussion will be structured under the four objectives namely; explore quality assurance strategies and procedures being implemented by TEVETA for Community Skills Development Centers, identify how Community Skills Development Centers are managing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms, identify gaps being faced by Community Skills Development Centers and establish possible solutions or mitigation strategies towards the gaps identified by TEVETA and Community Skills Development Centers in the management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms. The main themes have been extracted from the data that was collected and discussed in detail by linking to literature and the theoretical framework.

5.2 Data

Data was collected through one on one interviews with a category of participants that were ranging from TEVETA management staff, Ministry of Labor Quality Assurance Manager, Community Skills Development Centers Managers, and academic staff; having a total of 20

participants. Interviews were conducted in the three regions of Malawi and each interview was recorded to ensure that every detail was captured. During the interviews, the researcher ensured that field notes were also written down for easy tracking and content generation when analyzing the data. Apart from the interviews, key documents were analyzed to support and provide input to the objectives of this study.

The internal and external quality assurance mechanism strategies, monitoring forms, evaluation and recommendation forms, and suggestion or feedback documentation were also crucial to the study because they determined the effectiveness and flagged out challenges being faced in the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms.

5.3 Quality Assurance and Procedures

Objective one: Explore quality assurance strategies and procedures being implemented by TEVETA for Community Skills Development Centers.

5.3.1 *Funding*

Funding is the overall component that ensures a smooth run of all activities in an institution and this is in agreement with Mubanga et al (2019) who asserts that it is conventional knowledge that education and training of any kind require financial resources if specified learning outcomes are to be attained. Additionally, Mubanga et al have made it very clear for TVET to cope and align itself with the global development trends and to be in the position to scaffold the attainment of sustainable development objectives and ultimate aims; the financing aspect is a crucial factor that requires greater consideration. Hence TEVETA has been tasked to have the upper role in providing funding that will enable CSDCs in the running of day-to-day activities. Government policies have now mandated enterprises to invest in skills subsidize

by costing this investment through various measures and in the case of Malawi through TEVET Levy (Mubanga et al, 2019).

These resources are budgeted for in the TVET sector to acquire and address the different needs that range from equipment, materials, and trainer's salaries just to mention a few. At the regional level; according to the findings, the CSDCs are mandated to write a request proposal that covers all the needs that are presented at TEVETA Regional Office from where the proposal is evaluated and necessary changes are made. When the changes have been made depending on the funds that were allocated to the CSDCs; the final proposal document is produced from where a request for the funds is sent to the TEVETA Head Office. After critical scrutiny of the funds' request has been made, the funds are released at the regional level and then transferred to the rightful institution.

The researcher discovered that funding from TEVETA to CSDCs plays a major role in ensuring that quality assurance mechanisms are easily tackled and adhered to. This is supported by Chinyere et al (2015) who state adequate provision of instructional materials is one of the strategies to ensure the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms. For instance, to accommodate all the elements listed in the input component (these include students, teachers, non-teaching staff, managers, curriculum, facilities, instructional materials, and other resources) there is a need for funding to be available. The financial investment in the input components of the CSDCs ensures smooth adherence to the quality assurance mechanisms and most importantly it is the first step of quality assurance strategies and procedures implemented by TEVETA to assure adherence to its strategies.

5.3.2 ***Curriculum***

The curriculum is defined as all selected, organized, integrative, innovative, and evaluative educational experiences provided to learners consciously or unconsciously under the school authority to achieve the designated learning outcomes which are achieved as a result of growth, maturation, and learning meant to be best utilized for life in a changing society (Mutale, 2018). The TVET department has been mandated to enable learners to acquire all aspects of education and training comprised of the study and attainment of competencies linked to occupational trades in various sectors of economic and social life which prepares them for the labor market to become either employed or self-employed on completion of the training (Badawi,2013).

Therefore, to ensure uniformity and strict monitoring of the content that is being acquired by students, TEVETA has its curriculum that is subdivided into module packages. The researcher came to understand that the curriculum through the module packages stands in as immediate strategies and procedures that give boundaries and minimizes non-adherence to quality assurance. This concurs with Igborgbor (2012) who states that quality assurance is the execution of procedures planned by people in authority to make sure that teaching and learning address societal needs. Oviawe (2018) also comes in, to stress that developing relevant skills and matching training with the job for sustainable living is fundamental to effective TVET and this objective can be achieved if TVET knows the needs the workplace requires from TVET products or graduates.

The immediate use of the TEVETA Curriculum establishes the processes of ensuring that the institution is certified or accredited by them as they are required to follow the modules that have been provided. The researcher was able to verify this through the different module trade packages that were found at the CSDCs. According to Madungwa (2012), the needs comprised

in the curriculum are not limited to the acquisition of practical capacity, theoretical and technical knowledge that shows knowledge of operating principles and relates to practice, creativity and entrepreneurship, social capacity, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Madungwa further states that other skills required by the workplace include communicative skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, teamwork, long learning and information management skills, entrepreneurship skills, ethics, morals, and professional, and leadership skills. This on its own gives an assurance that students will be awarded their certificates which guarantees the industry or employer that the graduate with the TEVETA certificate is from the corridors that are identified to be of high standards and quality. However, Mubanga et al (2019), stress that TVET institutions can only provide the needed caliber of graduates if it does not operate in isolation from the operating industries requiring skilled employees. Idialu (2013) also stresses that the quality of instruction of this curriculum must be backed up with good teaching methods, and adequate facilities to aid teaching and learning.

5.3.3 ***Inspection, Monitoring, and Evaluation***

Monitoring is considered to be a continuous collection and analysis of data over time with a focus on identifying changes and trends without making any judgment thus according to Sager & Hinterleitner (2014); they further define evaluation as a judgment on the attainment of the same goal. Idialu (2013), also adds to say inspection is an activity delegated to agencies who are assigned to carry out this task. As part of adherence, trainers are required to have a checklist and conduct continuous assessments to monitor how the students are progressing in the training. The researcher was able to appreciate the records that the institutions had on each of the students to monitor the progress they were making.

Additionally, trainers themselves are also monitored on how they get to deliver the content and if they are following or using the module packages as required. The document analysis checklist also appreciated the records some of CSDCs had on the peer session oversite visits. From this, the researcher discovered the two-fold monitoring processes to ensure adherence to the curriculum which falls on the trainers and students themselves.

For instance, if the trainers are not monitored in both content compliance and delivery the output will be greatly affected as the students will not be that employable caliber that is categorized to be of high standards as perceived by TEVETA. On the same thought, if students are not assessed both through the checklist and continuous assessment it would be hard to know the status they are in and also hard to verify if the trainers used the content in the module packages. This concurs with Idialu (2013) and Chinyere et al (2015) who state that it is of paramount importance for TVET institutions to make it a habit of having internal quality assurance mechanisms that they can follow as a preamble guideline to the external quality assurance mechanism.

Additionally, TEVETA has put in place resource management systems that are adhered to by CSDCs when it comes to the finances they have received from TEVETA. This auditing from TEVETA helps in monitoring the right spending of the resources that they were provided for which ensures quality productivity as each penny was spent as planned and approved by them. The timeliness itself aligns with Nyonje et al (2012) that states effective M&E is dependent on good planning.

5.4 Management and Implementation of Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Objective two: Identify how Community Skills Development Centers are managing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms.

5.4.1 *Planning, Monitoring, and Assessment*

5.4.1.1 Curriculum Compliance

The current TEVET system promotes the concept of Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) where the training programs are based on precisely stated outcomes or competencies which are derived from the world of work (TEVETA, 2004). Through this form of curriculum, the training is conducted in stand-alone modules where a learner is credited with completed modules. The researcher discovered that CSDCs are required to have these modules as part of their accreditation on them so that they follow the standards needed.

The researcher further found out that CSDCs are obliged to plan out all needed materials to conduct the training through the guidance of the module packages. Planning as defined by Shapiro (2017) is the systematic process of establishing a need and then working out the best way to meet the need, within a strategic framework that enables you to identify priorities and determines your operational principles. This planning on its own is seen to be one of the key elements that ensure quality assurance strategies and procedures success. For instance, the study results show that by referring to the trade module packages the management at CSDCs can plan out and extract the funding they will require to purchase materials for the students to use in their practical work.

Compliance with the curriculum is ably seen by the follow-ups that the Principal makes most especially on the lesson plans, schemes of work, and student profiles. These documents are

frequently checked to ensure there is the right content flow that is at the same time tallying with the students' profiles. Additionally, session oversites are conducted to monitor session delivery quality which the researcher saw to be fit as it helps the trainers get peer reviews of how they are delivering the sessions which gives room for growth and this activity does not wait for TEVETA personnel. The researcher also discovered that the session oversite is not just the responsibility of the Principal but each academic staff is assigned to take part and build each team member.

Student assessment through the checklist and continuous assessments are done as one way of ensuring the students are acquiring the knowledge at a set mark with perfection and this is in line with TQF Handbook (2008) that outlines that the CBET system requires a learner to be continuously assessed and provided with feedback at each stage. The researcher discovered that through this activity, students are easily and quickly identified if they are being left behind of which next steps are followed to ensure they catch up. This system acts as a quality assurance mechanism as this process makes sure every student graduates with average excellence in skills and this is in line with TEVETA (2004) that states a learner only progresses to the next task after fully mastering and demonstrating competence on the previous task.

5.4.1.2 Financial Management Compliance

Vocational and Technical Education according to Oviawe (2018) must be adequately funded to revamp the economy for environmental sustainability. It is important to understand that TVET financing is largely determined by the rules and regulations whereby financial resources are collected, allocated, and managed (ETF, ILO, UNESCO, 2012). Having this in mind; CSDCs are provided with funding from TEVETA in line with the request they make regarding the module packages they will deliver. When the funding has been disbursed to CSDCs; the

researcher acquired from the study that there is a procurement committee that is in place at the institution which gives guidance on the procurement procedures. This is in line with Mathiba & Lefeya (2019) who entail that the spending of public funds uses an acceptable set of requirements in which the funds can be spent in line with the prevailing legal regulations and constitutional principles.

The procurement committee ensures that the right materials of high-quality are purchased and authorized receipts are collected from certified dealers as required by the audit team from TEVETA. The researcher was able to appreciate the good record keeping that was there with evidence of certified receipts. Adherence to these procedures helps to have well-compiled and approved financial reports that have all the required documents and when submitted to the audit team at TEVETA there are no disallowed costs that have to be reimbursed. This is in line with pubic financial accountability that necessitates that institutions prudently manage their finances, which means they should integrate their financial and non-financial reporting, control, budgeting, and performance measurement (Nzewi & Musokeru, 2014). This is also considered to be the financial accountability that is ethical or lawfully acted upon by an institution by explaining how funds, resources, or authority entrusted by the third party have been used (Ngubane & Xaba, 2010).

The findings of the study revealed that TEVETA does conduct financial management training for the institutions' management where they are orientated on how best they can manage the funds at the institution. In addition to this; TEVETA does provide a guiding manual of how financial record keeping should be done and this looks at forms to be used to liquidate and balance the books. Having this perfected record-keeping makes it easy for the internal audit team from TEVETA to easily carry out their audit exercise. Furthermore; the researcher

discovered that this good financial record keeping is an indicator of quality assurance as it restricts CSDCs to purchase materials needed and materials that are of high quality as well.

5.5 Quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices gaps

Objective Three: Identity gaps being faced by Community Skills Development Centers

5.5.1 *Inadequate Funding*

As described by Mubanga et al (2019) funding is a crucial input of any educational system hence resources are the major component that enhances quality strategies and procedures. This therefore makes it hard to talk about the relevance and quality of education without considering the issue of funding and indeed the funding process. Far more importantly, for TVET to achieve its objectives of enabling learners to meet up with the ever-changing living standard in a fast-growing technological world and creating jobs for sustainable living, it must be strengthened through alternative sources of funding because the government cannot singlehandedly shoulder this enormous task (Mubanga et al, 2019).

However, the researcher found out that though this component is there the funding that comes from TEVETA is inadequate. This is supported by the Ministry of Education through the National Education Sector Plan (2008) which affirms the poor management and operation of TVET institutions which has resulted in limited funding and that this has contributed to the inadequate and obsolete equipment and materials they use for delivering lessons.

World Bank (2010) report adds on to say that the present funding system is inadequate in fostering institutional leadership and performance orientation in TVET institutions because a requirement is there for the institutions to refer to the central government even for minor

decisions. The inadequacy of funding affects the materials purchased to fit the budget and this forces them to purchase materials of low quality. That being the case it also affects them in purchasing these low-cost materials from unregistered traders hence affecting both the financial reports and end products made by the students in the practical component of their training. Adding on to the latter, the researcher discovered that the funding which is expected by the CSDCs does at times come very late in the course when training has commenced. The late funding therefore leads the institutions to deliver the sessions in an awkward flow where they just have to stick to the theory component which is greatly discouraged hence affecting the result of quality delivery of the sessions.

5.5.2 *Underqualified trainers/ Human resource*

Due to the same resource constraints, the researcher discovered that the CSDCs have underqualified human resources. All the 9 academic staff revealed to be at grade 3 of their certification which is a qualification not equivalent to one being a professional trainer and none of the managers in the CSDCs has an accounting qualification. This is supported by Odike et al (2020) who discovered that majoring in vocational institutions are poorly staffed and barely have skilled and experienced trainers all due to inadequate funding. The management team disclosed that they are not qualified when it comes to academic qualification but they can manage the institution through job experience (Chimpolo, 2013). This the researcher saw to be a compromise to the delivery of the quality strategies and procedures.

Additionally, the researcher discovered that when the management is better qualified in their academics the success of the CSDCs in adhering and producing their own internal quality assurance mechanisms is certain. For example, the researcher discovered that some CSDCs developed work plans that guided them in what should be done at what particular time and the

responsible person which encourages accountability. Additionally, some CSDCs have a well-structured in-house session delivery oversite from where peer evaluations are made with feedback. All these differences in management bring about different outputs in each CSDC.

The trainers themselves are underqualified as discovered by the researcher since the majority of the trainers have the TEVETA certificates hence they lack the pedagogical component of teaching the students. This is strongly supported by Idialu (2013) who looked at the quality of trainers which do have a great impact on the assessment of quality in TVET institutions. The author further suggests that the trainers need to be adequately qualified for the job of imparting knowledge and must be equipped with the principles and practices of vocational education.

In other instances, there is an intentional focus on the trainer's qualifications, experiences, competencies, capacities, and the acquisition of desirable skills to carry out certain tasks. Due to the lack of resources for trainers to undergo proper lecturing of pedagogical training; they get to have little exposure to the pedagogical component of teaching by in-house training that happens by a qualified teacher. Though this is done and it is not the full package and it is a sign that the quality of delivery is compromised.

5.5.3 ***Inadequate infrastructure, equipment, and materials***

Inadequate resources have also made the institutions not have resource centers like libraries and required equipment to conduct practical sessions. The researcher came to understand that the lack of library resources gives boundaries for the students to not explore and get exposed to different contents to add to the knowledge that they acquire. This is also in support of Odike et al (2020) who ascertain that vocational institutions of learning turn out poorly equipped

graduates as there are no funds to establish standard laboratories, workshops, studios, and other requisites for an effective vocational institution.

The trainer is therefore constrained and responsible for finding additional materials for the students to refer to which is costly and tiresome on their end. Mwila (2016) noted that TVET institutions did not provide well-stocked library facilities to the students which would affect their levels of theoretical understanding of technical concepts. This results in over-reliance on old and obsolete literature thereby denying students and staff opportunities to research and familiarize themselves with more recent developments in various spheres of specialization.

Lack of equipment also compromises the way lessons are to be conducted as the students have to just grasp the conceptual part of the lesson which is discouraged. For instance, one of the CSDC Fashion and Design class has 4 functional sewing machines which should carter for over 10 students. A study conducted by Dasmani (2011) in Ghana also suggested that appropriate teaching facilities had remained grossly inadequate in the practical training of TEVET students. The inadequacy of the facilities resulted in training sessions being undertaken without practical activities that were necessary to bring out the best of students' talents. The study discovered that most of the tools and equipment were obsolete. Additionally, some of the Centers that participated in the study confirmed to have the equipment but they cannot use them because the centers do not have access to electricity which is very tricky when it comes to the delivery of the module and makes things complicated.

5.5.4 ***Inadequate human resource welfare***

Another discovery that was made by the researcher was that due to lack of funding or resources the trainers' welfare is not critically considered. For instance, these trainers at CSDCs are

employed on a need basis which does not give them job security. Odike et al (2020) affirms this as there is poor remuneration for trainers hence opting for short-term contracts. They tend to turn their focus on piece works to ensure they add on to the remuneration they receive and to save that income for future use especially when they are not on duty at the school.

This was seen to be a great concern by the researcher because when it comes to the delivery of the sessions, there is a compromise. After all, the trainers' focus when it comes to the practical component is on fending for themselves and not the delivery of the content to the students. Additionally, there is no provision of accommodation for the trainers and the trainers are required to travel from distant places from the institution, and by the time they reach the institutions they are exhausted hence the delivery of the modules is compromised.

5.5.5 *Poor Curriculum*

5.5.5.1 Mode of delivery

The curriculum is considered the key tool in ensuring quality structures and procedures are highly maintained. In this regard, the researcher identified a few drawbacks that might need to be reconsidered. Looking at the nature of students that are recruited in CSDCs, the researcher discovered that with the educational qualification that they have that is at a minimum of Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) or Primary School Leaving Certificate (PSLC) to no educational qualification at all; the instructional language (English) for the module delivery becomes an obstacle to quality delivery of the sessions. This is supported by Zainuddin et al (2019) who stress that TVET graduates lack English competency in the related field which affects their performance. This also concurs with Azli et al (2018) who state the lack of English Language competency affects the operational performance in the industry.

The trainers are therefore forced to change the mode of delivery to the local language (Chichewa) which the researcher sees to devalue the module lessons because every teacher gets to translate the module in a different way they see fit and at the end of the day quality is affected. In addition to this, the mode of delivery for these modules does not have a methodology or pedagogy of delivery to the students. Ismail et al (2018) mentioned that some vocational – technical teachers do find it challenging to teach the content courses in the English language due to their inability to speak and write in English, therefore, still devaluing the quality that needs to be acquired.

5.5.5.2 Outdated Curriculum Content

The researcher also discovered that the module packages are not contextualized in the sense that some of the topics and equipment that are mentioned in the module are not locally found in the country or worse still cannot be afforded if they are to purchase the items. This is supported by Ojimba (2012) stating the curricula are based on a foreign model which has evolved under ideal conditions that are not easily duplicated in developing countries hence having a foreign background that is often illustrated with examples outside the local environment.

The researcher therefore came to discover that the trainers themselves tend to also not be very conversant with the topics or even the equipment which leads them to just skip that part of the session to avoid being asked a lot of questions that they may not have answers to. Furthermore, the trainers tend to not see the value those outdated or advanced topics will bring to both the student and themselves because, at the end of the day, the exposure to the module will not be translated to the practical component. Therefore, these topics or components were incorporated

for a purpose in the module but they tend to not add value in our local context at the same time they are part of the integration of the quality standards and procedures that have to be followed.

5.5.6 ***Poor Feedback***

Feedback is the key component that helps to translate the structure and procedures into quality assurance. The researcher discovered that the feedback loops at both internal and external levels are not very effective and prompt which leaves a lot of loopholes in the standards that are expected to be met. For instance, when the external verifiers come for both the assessment and content delivery verification; feedback is not given on a timely basis and at times not given at all. One of the participants acknowledged that feedback is hard to get from the verifiers and it takes the centers' efforts to go to their offices and acquire the feedback from the visit they made.

Another participant complained about not receiving certificates for graduates at the institution who graduated in 2016. This sort of feedback flow affects a lot when it comes to quality because if feedback is not being received from TEVETA; the CSDCs will not improve on how they must run certain things to improve on the quality standards and at the same time if the institutions are not able to provide the certificates to the students they have both failed in complying with the standards. This is supported by Pompitakpan (2004) who describes that feedback that comes from a high- credible source appears to improve performance, especially when the message content is negative. Data collected from all these components will give feedback on how quality assurance mechanisms are being managed and implemented; if need be learning from the feedback is the most crucial aspect as TVET institutions can work on their weaknesses and continue on the strengths identified. From these evaluations; other TVET

institutions can be able to learn and work on their existing mechanisms most especially internal quality assurance mechanisms (Idialu, 2013).

However, the issue of reporting and follow-up has received so little systematic attention, Gabriel & Anton (2012) pointed out that this lack of follow-up has several dimensions, too few supervisors provide immediate feedback on their findings to the teachers and school heads. They give equally little attention to follow-up on their supervision. These challenges could emanate from the fact that the leadership of our technical and vocational institutions is often placed in the hands of leaders who are products of general education.

The researcher was able to identify that there is a lack of coordination between the institutions and industries which affects the quality standards that are supposed to be met. This is in agreement with UNESCO (2019) stating the quality assurance process for the TEVET sector is still fragmented and uncoordinated although TEVETA indicates its efforts to ensure this issue is addressed. When the time comes for the students to go to the industry the placements take a lot of time to be done because the industries cannot absorb them but this is a requirement that has to be done by the students. In conjunction with the latter, institutions do not have access to monitor the student's progress especially to verify the progress and if the set standards are being met by the industry. This lack of coordination compromises the standards and procedures that need to be implemented because the two entities tend to be speaking two different languages. For instance, students are taught and trained with certain standards that are required by TEVETA but when they get to the industry things are done differently and that which was obtained is compromised.

Lastly, the researcher discovered that decisions made towards the improvements and changes in CSDCs are derived without proper consultations to hear out their views which can greatly inform of the changes and improvements that can be made. This form of feedback can greatly inform and improve some of the challenges that are being met by both TEVETA and CSDCs at large. One of the participants concurred by stating that they bring the people on the ground have solutions to some of the challenges they face but they have no platform to voice out their concerns and suggestions which at the end of the day leaves the strategies and procedures of quality assurance at a stagnant state.

5.6 Mitigation strategies in management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices

Objective four: Establish possible solutions or mitigation strategies towards the gaps identified by TEVETA and Community Skills Development Centers in the management and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms.

5.6.1 *Adequate Funding and Resource Mobilization*

The possible solution that the researcher discovered and was given by the participants was the issue of adequate and timely funding which if done as said will improve the quality of results. Adequate provision of instructional materials was raised by Chinyere et al (2015) as one of the strategies to ensure the implementation of a quality assurance mechanism which Idialu (2013) added for this component to be backed up with good teaching methods, adequate facilities to aid teaching and learning, equal learning opportunities for all students, provision of a conducive learning and communal assistance to students and teachers.

The participants urged TEVETA to provide them with enough resources and funding so that they can meet the standards they are expected to bring out and at the same time ensure that the funds come in at the required time so that they stick to the chronological time frame of doing things. One of the participants further agreed to this and proposed that TEVETA should provide the materials needed for the sessions so that the materials bought by them are of the standard they require and for them to just receive the operational costs. This was suggested because the funds that come in are under-budgeted and affect the quality of materials they get to purchase. This at the end of the day results in having products that are not of high standards as expected.

To support the CSDCs one of the participants indicated that they can mobilize resources that they use to cover up the gaps they face. This is supported by Antón (2014) who states that national training institutions can also seek to bolster their initial financing by diversifying their revenue sources to achieve long–term sustainability. The participant indicated that they collect these resources from the student commitment fee that is paid once during enrolment. This line of thinking is in support of Uhder (2017) who suggests other revenue generation to not be limited to the sale of goods and services generated through the training process. The researcher concluded that this is innovative thinking that helps in pushing for the targets unlike just focusing on one source of funding. However, this innovative thought was discovered to not be done by other institutions as a way of increasing their existing funding.

5.6.2 *Adequate equipment, materials, and infrastructure*

On the same, there is a need to have equipment at the centers to ably deliver the sessions practically and not just in theory form because the equipment needed for the practical component is not available. The availability of equipment at the centers will surely improve the quality of structures and procedures in need of adherence. Teachers' utilization of relevant

equipment, materials, and tools in teaching facilitates learning and enhances students' achievements (Umunadi, 2012). To complement this the participants raised the need to also have a library from where students can access more of the content they are acquiring from the classrooms. The content in the books will help the students to become more inquisitive and creative as they will be challenged to venture into unique projects hence strengthening the quality strategies and procedures that have been put in place.

The researcher was also made aware of the need to renovate the CSDCs to the required standard as is the prerequisite of quality assurance. Most of the structures have inadequate classrooms and even buildings that are not in a good state, and some structures do not even have electricity at the center hence electric equipment cannot be used which is a major throwback to fulfilling and adhering to the quality standards. Therefore, as proposed by Bandele & Faremi (2012) relevant equipment, materials, and tools such as workshops laboratories, lecture rooms courses, and reference texts are required in the teaching and learning process to yield the intended educational outputs. For instance, the textbooks are useful in the development of instructional content and the rooms (workshops, laboratories, and lecture rooms) provide a supported environment in which learners interact with the content to achieve the intended educational outputs namely syllabus coverage, acquisition of employability skills and life-long skills (Kigwilu & Akala, 2017).

5.6.3 ***Staff qualification upgrade***

The researcher was informed of the need to either employ qualified staff or let staff undergo upgrading especially when it comes to financial management. This was said with the mentality of ensuring that finances are well managed and accounted for as required by the TEVETA financial system. As it is now, the CSDCs that participated in the study indicated to not have

any qualified accountants because they cannot afford to pay them if they are employed. However, a stress was made that if there is adequate funding for the institutions to be able to upgrade the current accountants or employ qualified accountants there is a guarantee to improve their score on quality strategies and procedures when it comes to financial management.

Additionally, there is a need for the current staff to undergo academic upgrading dwelling on the roles they take at the institution for instance; issues of governance and the pedagogical component of lesson delivery when it comes to technical lessons. Chinyere et al (2015) concur with Idialu (2013) by proposing that trainers should undergo training and retraining to ensure that they are highly qualified and up to date with methodologies in TVET delivery. The majority of the staff at the CSDCs have just graduated and deployed to be trainers in CSDCs hence they learn on the job when it comes to these components hence failing to reach the quality standards as expected. This is a need that has to be critically looked in to improve and cover up the shortfalls that are there in the implementation of strategies and procedures in quality assurance.

The researcher also identified an immediate solution that the CSDCs came up with to partly resolve the challenge of staff qualification by coming up with in-house capacity building for instance where they have to involve a primary school teacher to train the trainers in how they can effectively and efficiently develop lesson plans for their sessions. This has on record improved the quality of lesson delivery though it is not the exact content that is required in technical lesson delivery but such components have greatly improved as observed in session oversites. This is supported by (Okoye & Arimonu (2016), who advocate the training of academic staff to be a continuous exercise that ensures consistent improvement in the quality

of products. TEVETA on the other hand has also made efforts of conducting financial and governance training sessions for the accountants and leaders of the institutions to deal away with the gaps that were identified.

5.6.4 *Curriculum Review and Upgrade*

The current module packages that have been provided for by TEVETA have been reviewed by the participants to require adjustments in terms of being reviewed and adjusted accordingly. The first adjustment that was mentioned was the need to contextualize the modules to fit our nation. The modules have instances where the content being discussed does not fit well into our Malawian context because that technology has not been introduced to our country or it is an outdated technology. For instances where the technology being taught has not been introduced to our country; the trainers tend to be looked down upon by the students because they fail to respond to the questions they are asked which translates to them not knowing the content. This is supported by Ojimba (2012) who states the curricula are adjudged to be too academic and overloaded with intellectual content in pure science and mathematics at the expense of basic engineering and technology.

In line with the latter, academic staff pointed out that they discovered that the majority of the students have developed an attitude towards them not delivering the right content because they saw local artisans making the same product differently from the curriculum. Trainers complained that this has led to situations where the students would want to dictate what they saw local artisans do and claim that to be the right way of doing things and this becomes very hard to contain because some of the content in the curriculum has not been contextualized and because it is hard for the trainers to deliver the lessons it has placed a wrong thought or attitude in the students' minds.

This background led the participants to encourage TEVETA to regularly review and update the curriculum to avoid such instances. This falls in line with the work-based learning that is illustrated by the Curriculum Value Chain (CVC) model where a description of how information on educational attainments and labor market integration is used for designing and updating VET curricula (Renold et al, 2014; 2015). Suggestions were also brought to the researcher's attention that as TEVETA is reviewing the curriculum relevant stakeholders must be part of this for instance trainers, local artisans, and industries just to mention a few.

The researcher discovered that the involvement of the aforementioned parties will help in coming up with a comprehensive curriculum that is up-to-date and relevant for both our nation and globally. The findings also confirm those by Nyonje et al. (2012) that to enhance the impact of an evaluation, stakeholders ought to be involved at the various stages of the evaluation.

This involvement will also help in coming up with content that is worldwide recommended under quality assurance and ably put us on the global market as a nation. TEVETA officials concurred with this thought as it would fill the gap that is there between the industry and those on the ground in the TEVET industry, hence making it easy to comply and be in line with the stated quality assurance mechanisms that are in place.

Additionally, as an enrolment criterion, the academic qualification background of the students enrolled at CSDCs comprises a majority of those who have qualifications that range from JCE to PSLC and even no qualification at all. The researcher discovered that this element does not tally with the current TEVET curriculum as it has shown to be very tricky and hard for the students to grasp the concepts being taught by the trainer because the quality of the content is

compromised through translation. After all, the modules were designed in English and that was the mode of delivery.

The trainers are therefore required to translate and deliver the content in their local language which to both them and the researcher is a concern because each one of them translates the content as they understand and worse still the content has a lot of technical words that can be misinterpreted in the local language hence affecting the end product. Therefore, there is a need to have the modules translated into the local language to ensure uniformity of delivery, content, and use of technical words when the trainers teach in the local language. Ismail et al. (2018) suggested that trainers should be able to use the English language however in this case Chichewa language in delivering the lessons besides ensuring the students' understanding of the subject content. This will equip them with the knowledge and technical terms which should help motivate them in teaching the subjects and preparing the students to enter the working environment.

5.6.5 ***Timely Feedback***

Feedback is the major key that strengthens strategy and procedures in quality assurance hence the need for the improvement of feedback loops. Timely feedback was the greatest concern and need for change from both TEVETA and CSDCs hence the need to create structures that will enable timely external feedback in both institutions. This agrees with Oraemis (2017) who pointed out that supervisees learn during supervision since the supervisors are more knowledgeable, they correct and advise the supervisees, they assist the trainers in improving their level of proficiency, controlling the quality of education and skills received by the students and lay emphasis on the classroom performances of the teachers, especially on the duties assigned to them.

However, school supervision becomes effective when supervisors, principals, vice principals, and as well heads of departments focus their attention on building the capacity of the teachers, then giving them the autonomy they need to practice effectively (Ogbo &| Okorji, 2019). Nkechi (2015) opined that the better way for school principals to manage their schools is to get feedback through supervision to make necessary adjustments and make them effective and that school management especially can use the obtained results from the supervision practice as a tool for the development of the schools.

In addition to this, the participants mentioned the need to strengthen coordination between industries and institutions to ensure the efforts towards quality assurance are equally shared by having common quality assurance mechanisms to follow. This collaboration will ensure that both the industries and institutions speak the same language and there is no contradiction and they will get to strive for the same set goal. Chisi (2017) agrees to say skills development cannot be achieved and implemented without the involvement of the industrial sector, therefore, to ensure that TVET training responds to the labor market; people who are TVET knowledgeable must be involved in the organization, planning, and implementation set-up of the TVET system. The researcher agrees with Chisi because this is very crucial as it will enable effective and timely communication on the same as the right individuals and structures have been put in place.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the discussions of findings in this chapter have given an overview of the ideal strategies and procedures that are in the quality assurance mechanism provided by TEVETA and narrowed down to the implementing partners specifically CSDCs from where weaknesses and loopholes have been identified accompanied by proposed solutions. Maclean (2011) asserts

that TVET if well positioned could play multidimensional roles of stimulating economic growth, social development, improving conventional education, empowerment, wealth creation, poverty reduction, and skills enhancement. All this information has enabled the researcher to get an in-depth overview of what transpires from the documented information to the realities on the ground, the written down strategies and procedures to what is being implemented on the ground. Furthermore, the researcher has had the opportunity to get views from both the governing body (TEVETA) and those implementing partners (CSDCs) from where the researcher had to make appropriate conclusions.

CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the conclusion, and recommendations that have been derived from the findings of this study that focused on exploring the essential elements in the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices in Community Skills Development Centres. The researcher has given input by building into and expanding on the recommendations that seem fit and in line with the findings in this study.

However, the key limitation of this study was that data was gathered from academic and management staff from CSDCs, TEVETA, and the Ministry of Labor who were purposively selected. This implies that the perspectives that were made by these key participants may not be similar if all CSDCs were to be involved in this study. Therefore, the purposive sampling technique adopted makes the research findings not be generalized for all CSDCs.

6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study findings have brought in two lines of thought coming from both the CSDCs and TEVETA on issues of quality assurance and enhancement practices. Though gaps were identified, solutions to resolving them are there and would require the collaboration of like-minded partners to seriously implement the propositions to have a better and desired outcome in the quality assurance component most especially in CSDCs.

The researcher during this study came across emerging issues that would require further studies which were not limited to the following: an in-depth study that is narrowed down at the institution to critically look at their internal quality assurance mechanisms to guide in what

improvements and or new structures that can be developed to help them in coping up with the existing structures at TEVETA and getting input from both current and graduated students for them to evaluate the quality assurance mechanisms that are existent at the institutions and get their propositions on how they think other things should be done.

6.2.1 *Quality assurance and Procedures*

The study has revealed that the quality assurance mechanism and procedures are in place and have been shown through the funding that is provided for by TEVETA to Community Skills Development Centres every year. The provision and following of a curriculum that governs the flow of lessons has given a glimpse of the control of what needs to be acquired and how. Lastly, the process of inspection, monitoring, and evaluation has shown to give evidence of the existing processes that are in place.

6.2.2 *Management and Implementation of Quality Assurance Mechanisms*

The research findings showed the exponential implementation of both internal and external quality assurance practices that are in place at the institutions. Management at the institutions is seen to take a keen interest to ensure that they comply with what they are required to do. Interestingly, some institutions that participated in the study have shown to be innovate to even develop their internal quality assurance mechanisms to easily flow through the external quality assurance mechanisms. For instance, the use of schemes and lesson plans during the delivery of lessons to give a chronological flow of both the curriculum and lesson sessions. Furthermore, the management of finances has a clear accountability and transparency flow from both management and committee staff which makes it easy for the external audit team to conduct its audit.

6.2.3 *Quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices gaps*

However, even though funding, curriculum and inspection, monitoring and evaluation structures are in place things are still lacking behind when it comes to quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices. Issues of inadequate funding, underqualified trainers/ human resource, inadequate infrastructure, equipment, and materials, inadequate human resource welfare, poor feedback, and poor curriculum specifically looking at the mode of delivery and outdated curriculum content. These issues are greatly affecting quality assurance and enhancement practices at CSDCs and this is evident with the output that is there. Overall, all these issues are greatly linked to inadequate funding which if innovatively addressed can bring great change at CSDCs.

6.2.4 *Mitigation Strategies in Management and Implementation of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Practices*

Despite the drawback in the implementation of quality assurance and enhancement practices in CSDCs, solutions were suggested to at least address the challenges faced. Funding is the overall component that can bring a difference in the implementation of quality assurance and enhancement practices; rather than just having adequate funding resource mobilization was also suggested to look at other avenues that can bring in resources in CSDCs. The coming in of these resources would also cater for adequate equipment, materials, infrastructure, upgrade of staff qualification, curriculum reviews, and improvement on the feedback loops that are in existence.

6.3 Recommendations

Having critically analyzed the findings of this study, the researcher in this chapter formulated recommendations that are seen to be fit in addressing some of the key pointers of this study especially to ensure that there is an enhancement in the strategies and procedures of quality assurance at CSDCs in Malawi.

6.3.1 *Resource Mobilization and Social Enterprise*

As earlier mentioned funding is the backbone of ensuring that quality assurance strategies and procedures are well-focused on and implemented at all levels. The research findings have indicated the inadequacy of funding that is directed to CSDCs of which affects the delivery of the outputs. To cover up for this inadequacy, the researcher suggests to have a resource mobilization structure at each of the CSDCs for them to generate additional income to help run the institutions by providing for their needs. At the moment, some of the CSDCs use the supplementary income from the commitment fee that the students pay but it is still not enough to cover up on some of the gaps that are in existence.

Therefore, the researcher thought of the communities the centers are based in and the collaboration they can get as a form of service from them. The researcher critically looked at the need of the institutions to run a needs assessment in the community for them to create or produce a catalog of products that the community needs and will surely purchase. These products in the catalog can be made by the students during the practical sessions which might be of interest to community members, therefore, having an opportunity to mobilize additional resources for the center. This is in agreement with Uhder (2017) that state revenue ideas can include the sale of goods and services generated through the training process; renting

equipment and facilities to private enterprises and delivering services outside of the institutes' premises.

This form of income generation can therefore require the centers to also invest in this venture to ensure the availability of high-quality materials to produce high-quality standard products that can be sold to community members. If there is an opportunity for them to expand their market, especially with an emphasis on high-quality products, then they can go beyond the community-level target.

If this venture is well managed; CSDCs can top up on the existing funding that comes from TEVETA and ensure they cover up on all the challenges they mentioned to have hindered them from fully adhering to the quality assurance strategies and procedures. At the end of the day, this expansion will also ensure the growth of CSDCs and for them to even accommodate more students more than once a year as is the case for most of them. In agreement with the findings, Palmer (2019) stated that there needs to be greater awareness that countries do not just need sufficient and predictable revenue streams to fund training programs, but perhaps just as importantly they need to have in place appropriate financing mechanisms that are themselves strongly linked to achieving reform policy objectives.

6.3.2 ***Curriculum Review and Update***

The researcher also discovered that the modules need to be revised to have an effective quality delivery. For instance, the researcher concurs with one of the participants who had a challenge with the flow of topics in the Carpentry and Joinery module where safety measures are not the first content to be shared with the students. In addition to this, the researcher discovered the need to revise the module with the current trends and technology that have transpired to ensure

students acquire up-to-date knowledge that will help them deliver at a par of high standard. As this is done the review should also consider contextualizing the content so that students easily grasp the concepts. However, during the review and updating of the curriculum, the researcher proposes the need to involve all relevant parties as has been outlined in the findings to ensure that all gaps are tackled. These involved parties or stakeholders should range from personnel from TEVETA as they are the leading body, trainers from all technical institutions not leaving out those in CSDCs and privately owned institutions, industry representatives, organizations, and relevant ministries just to mention a few.

Additionally, to accommodate the caliber of students CSDCs enroll, a proposition of having a secondary translated module that is in our local language which will ensure uniformity in the delivery and also lessen the work for the trainers in translating the module on their own. As is the case at the moment each trainer translates according to their understanding for instance; the technical words in the module are translated as they see fit which can bring confusion if the students are sent to the industry but if one common translated word is used it will create uniformity in the industry as all will be speaking one language and this is a measure in quality assurance.

6.3.3 ***Staff Capacity Building***

In covering up for the current shortfalls at CSDCs the first step the researcher suggests is ensuring that the staff are up to speed in undertaking their duties effectively for the institutions to conduct a needs assessment on each category of staff. When this activity has been done, and regarding the gaps identified in the study which were not limited to pedagogical delivery of teaching, governance, and financial management; a report should be written to TEVETA regional offices of these gaps for them to seek collaboration with universities in the nation that

are good at handling these main gaps that were identified so that the staff can have a bridge academic program for them to acquire that knowledge. Chinyere et al (2015) concur with Idialu (2013) by proposing that trainers should undergo training and retraining to ensure that they are highly qualified and up to date with methodologies in TVET delivery. Additionally, Chinyere et al advocates for adequate provision towards scholarship and grants for TVET trainers which can be considered as a motivational factor for the staff. Therefore it is of paramount importance that this is critically looked into and incorporated in the planning of TEVETA to collaborate and work hand in hand with relevant partners to ensure its staff is well equipped in knowledge to efficiently and effectively deliver as required.

6.3.4 *Establishment of Technical Teacher's Training Institutions*

For the long-term recommendation, the researcher thought of establishing a Teachers Technical College that will specifically cater to trainers in TVET as currently we do not have one as a nation (MoL, 2013). Having this structure will ensure the majority of the gaps being identified by TEVETA when they conduct their monitoring be comprehensively tackled as the trainers undertake their studies at the college. This establishment will have to even cater to managers as well to acquire knowledge on governance, leadership, and management so that they also best run the institutions to the best of their capabilities.

Having this structure will ensure uniformity in the delivery and methods of teaching the modules and lead to high standards of the students produced by the trainers. Handling of things by the trainers would also be different hence contributing to the way things are monitored. This institution would also bring that strong collaboration and partnership with the industry and relevant stakeholders as they would greatly contribute to the content and structure.

6.3.5 *Improved Monitoring Structures*

The research findings also stressed the need to have improved feedback loops that are timely and efficient for the growth and improvement of quality assurance mechanisms. Therefore, the researcher recommends to the developing and amplifying the already existing structures that are there so that feedback is well managed at all levels. It is of paramount importance for TVET institutions to make it a habit of having internal quality assurance mechanisms that they can follow as a preamble guideline to the external quality assurance mechanisms. This element will or can be very helpful because it will turn out to be something that is already internally built and no compliance issues can be filed (Idialu, 2013; Chinyere et al, 2015).

The formulation and revamping of the already existing monitoring structures of quality strategies and procedures will enhance the coordination that is supposed to be there, especially between the industry and the institutions at large. This means there will be continual communication between them, an exchange of knowledge, and current trends to ensure everyone is up to date.

This new structure will therefore accommodate and encourage decision-making with evidence where the majority of the suggestions have been critically analyzed and considered hence coming up with supported and research-based decisions which will have a high chance of succeeding. Additionally, this new structure will have a database where graduates are easily traced, monitored, and supported.

6.4 Final Remarks

In concluding the findings of the study there is an interlink with quality assurance and enhancement practices as one cannot do without the other. The study findings also showed there is a difference in the performance of the CSDCs in implementing quality assurance

mechanisms and enhancement practices which can be influenced by the staff qualification and ownership that motivates innovative thinking of how things should be done. However, inadequate funding is the negative drawback of implementing quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices. Therefore, the availability of adequate funding will eventually open opportunities to have adequate materials, equipment, infrastructure, reviewed curriculum, and qualified staff which are all crucial to promoting quality assurance and enhancement practices. This study has then contributed to the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement practices in Community Skills Development Centres.

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APPENDICES

Annex I - Letter of Introduction from Investigator

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga,
Mzuzu
23rd December, 2021.

The Chairperson
Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee
Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE

My name is Sifiwe Bamusi a student with an Identification Number MEDLM0120 at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master's degree in Education (Leadership and Management). As required I am supposed to conduct research as part of my two years in attaining this degree.

I wish to submit my proposed project titled ***"Exploring Quality Assurance Enhancement Practices in Malawi's TEVET Institutions: A Case of Selected Community Skills Development Centres"*** for ethical review by the MZUNI Research Ethics Committee to enable me to conduct my research in 3 selected Skills Development Centres.

Find enclosed herein the documents as outlined in the checklist for your review and approval.

Yours sincerely,

Sifiwe Bamusi.

Annex II - Ethical Clearance

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI
TEL: 01 320 722
FAX: 01 320 648

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/45 **5th April, 2022.**

Sifiwe Bamusi,
Mzuzu University,
P/Bag 201,
Mzuzu.
Email:
sifiwebamusi@gmail.com

Dear Sifiwe,

RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/45: EXPLORING QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT PRACTICES IN MALAWI'S TEVET INSTITUTIONS: A CASE OF SELECTED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

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

Committee Address:
Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw

maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,

Gift Mbwele

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR

For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC

Committee Address:
Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw

Annex III - Letter of Introduction

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

Department of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI

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

6TH APRIL 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MS SIFIWE BAMUSI

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

Kindly assist her accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Margaret M. Mdolo
Program Coordinator

Annex IV – Consent Form

Consent Form

Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)

Informed Consent Form for Research in

EXPLORING QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT PRACTICES IN MALAWI'S TEVET INSTITUTIONS: A CASE OF SELECTED COMMUNITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

Introduction

I am **Sifiwe Bamusi** from **Mzuzu University**. I am researching "**Exploring Quality Assurance and Enhancement Practices in Malawi's TEVET Institutions: A Case of Selected Community Skills Development Centres".** This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me or another researcher.

Purpose of the research

This research aims to equip those managing TVET institutions on how best they can implement the quality assurance mechanisms by planning to overcome the challenges or gaps that will be identified during this study. Additionally, this study will also help managers in understanding how

quality assurance mechanisms can be implemented to effectively and efficiently benefit individuals, the nation, and the world at large.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in an individual interview.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because **you are a key informant to provide the needed information needed for this research**.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate nothing will change. You may skip any question and move on to the next question.

Duration

The research takes place for a period of **45 minutes**.

Risks

You do not have to answer any questions or take part in the interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

Sharing the Results

The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you and your community before it is made widely available to the public. Following this, I will publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact: Miss. **Sifiwe Bamusi, Mzuzu University, Private Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu or contact her on +265 993 733 191**

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find out more about the Committee, contact Mr. Gift Mbwele, Mzuzu University Research Ethics (MZUNIREC) Administrator, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2, Phone: 0999404008/0888641486

Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in research about **Exploring Quality Assurance Enhancement Practices in Malawi's TEVET Institutions: A Case of Selected Community Skills Development Centres**

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the research project. I confirm the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____

Date _____

Day/month/y

Annex V - Data Collection Instruments

Interview Guide A

Community Skills Development Center Managers Interview Guide

1. What is your role at this institution and what part do you play in the implementation of quality assurance?
2. How do you monitor and evaluate both internal and external quality assurance mechanisms?
3. What are the quality assurance mechanisms that you follow internally?
4. What are the challenges and gaps you face as you implement the internal quality assurance mechanisms?
5. What can you recommend as mitigation strategies to resolve the challenges you face as you implement the internal quality assurance mechanisms?
6. Explain the quality assurance mechanisms that you follow from TEVETA
7. What are the challenges you face as you implement the external quality assurance mechanisms from TEVETA?
8. What can you recommend as mitigation strategies to resolve the challenges you face as you implement the external quality assurance mechanisms?

Interview Guide B

Community Skills Development Center Academic Staff Interview Guide

1. What is your role at this institution and what part do you play in the implementation of quality assurance?
2. How do you monitor and evaluate both internal and external quality assurance mechanisms?
3. What are the quality assurance mechanisms that you follow internally?
4. What are the challenges you face as you implement the internal quality assurance mechanisms?
5. What can you recommend as mitigation strategies to resolve the challenges you face as you implement the internal quality assurance mechanisms?
6. Explain the quality assurance mechanisms that you follow from TEVETA
7. What are the challenges you face as you implement the external quality assurance mechanisms from TEVETA?
8. What can you recommend as mitigation strategies to resolve the challenges you face as you implement the external quality assurance mechanisms?

Interview Guide C

TEVETA Quality Assurance Manager Interview Guide

1. What is your role at this institution and what part do you play in the implementation of quality assurance?
2. What are the quality assurance mechanisms that have been put in place for Community Skills Development Centers to follow?
3. How are the CSDCs monitored and evaluated in the implementation of these quality assurance mechanisms
4. What are the challenges you face with CSDCs as they implement quality assurance mechanisms?
5. Do you see any gaps in the current quality assurance mechanisms that CSDCs have to implement?
6. What can you recommend to minimize the challenges CSDCs are facing as they implement quality assurance mechanisms?

Document Analysis Checklist

Document	Yes	No
Internal quality assurance mechanism strategy		
Internal quality assurance mechanism monitoring forms		
Internal quality assurance mechanism evaluation and recommendation forms		
External quality assurance mechanism strategy		
External quality assurance monitoring forms		
External quality assurance evaluation and recommendation forms		
Suggestion or feedback documentation		

1. How long have the quality assurance mechanism strategies been in use?
2. Who monitors the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms internally and at what intervals?
3. Who monitors the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms externally and at what intervals?
4. How are the recommendations handled?