Situation Analysis of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi, Critical Issues and Practical Implications Affecting their Operationalisation

By

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, **Emmanuel Malambo**, (student number **MEDLM2020),** certify that the thesis titled, **"Situation analysis of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi, critical issues and practical implications affecting their operationalization",** submitted towards the awarding of the degree of Master of Education in Leadership and Management, at Mzuzu University, to the best of my knowledge and understanding does not:

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Signed: _____

(Supervisor) Zizwa Msukuma, PhD

Date: 7 August, 2023

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to the Almighty God for the supremacy and Redeemer of my soul. To my late Grandfather Mr. Mateyo Banda who inspired me to be strong despite of many obstacles in life. This work is also dedicated to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Malambo. They have been the reason why I always want to achieve more in life. I hope this achievement will complete the dream that you had for me all those years ago when you chose to give me the best education you could.

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to assess the critical issues affecting operationalisation of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi. The objectives of the study were to assess critical issues which are affecting College management in the operationalisation of Community Technical Colleges in the country, identify and determine the challenges which trainees are facing in the process of acquiring practical skills in Community Technical Colleges and explore ways in which Community Technical Colleges can manage and address these critical issues. The research adopted a qualitative study approach while using Constructivism paradigm which helped the researcher to get in-depth understanding of participant's experience in Community Technical College setting. The study was guided by a conceptual framework derived from administrative management theory. Three Community Technical Colleges which participated were sampled from Central region of Malawi. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions. Prior to data collection, consent was sought from MZUNIREC which gave ethical clearance. Collected data was managed by storing it in forms like written notes and audios. Collected data was thematically analysed. The study findings were that Community Technical Colleges are highly affected by lack of teaching resources, funding, infrastructure and low trainee enrolment levels. The study has also established that teaching and learning resources, lack of trainings and professional development for teachers, lack of career path for trainees and absence of boarding facilities is negatively affecting trainees in their pursuit of acquiring practical skills. This is challenging the main goal behind introduction of Community Technical College in Malawi which was mainly increasing youth's access to Technical Education as put in the 2014 Malawi government concept paper on establishment of CTCs. The study explored ways on how Community Technical Colleges can manage and address the identified critical issues.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CTCs   : Community Technical Colleges

IOM   : International organization on Immigration

MANEB   : Malawi National Examinations Board

MoL   : Ministry of Labor

NTC   : National Technical Colleges

ORT   : Other recurrent transactions

TVET   : Technical and Vocational Education and Training

TEVET   : Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Community Technical College: Training institution whose educational facilities are available to youth and other members of the community

Operationalization : Process of making something functional, or putting something into effect

Situation analysis : A process that assists one to recognize new opportunities and challenges in and out of your institution, firm or products or services you render.

TEVETA : A government body mandated to facilitate provision of entrepreneurial and Vocational education and training (TEVET) in Malawi

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

At less than one percent, Malawi's tertiary education enrollment rate is among the lowest in the world, and is well below the average for sub-Saharan Africa. The Ministry of Education (2020) testifies that there is always high demand for tertiary education which is above available classroom space. Private colleges offer alternative programme courses for those who can afford. Still, private institutions only account for a very small percentage (approximately, 12 percent) of total college enrollment in the country.

Technical colleges are considered as a solution for students who want to work in an industry that requires hands-on training (Mulder, 2017). A technical college is described as a trade school a technical school, or a post-secondary educational institution designed to train students for a specific job in a skilled trade career (Malawi Enhancing TEVET Outcomes (ETO) Project, 2014.). Most importantly, technical colleges offer training to prepare students for actual work in their chosen field. Currently, there are seven National Technical Colleges (NTCs) in Malawi. NTCs are the oldest TEVET institutions and Malawi has been relying on these technical colleges before the establishment of community colleges.

A community college can be defined as a training institution whose educational facilities are available to youths and other members of the community (Brundrett et al., 2003). It can also be an institution established in a community, owned by a community and run by the community to cater

for youths and adults who would like to further their career and those who did not complete their schooling or never attended school (Bers & Calhoun, 2002). Community colleges play a critical role in workforce development across the nation. They have a broad mission to provide academic programming and skills training to prepare students for jobs or to transfer to four-year colleges and universities (Bosetti & Heffernan, 2021).

Malawi Government established community colleges in 2014 as a way of increasing access to Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) by out-of-school youth and adults (Government of Malawi, 2014). Community Technical Colleges were established after observing that there were so many youths who fail to make it to formal universities due to limited capacity and restrictive entry requirement. The Malawi government observed that access to technical and vocational education in Malawi has been so low compared to other Southern Africa Countries. Enrolment into formal TEVET institutions is said to be far below than other Southern African Countries like Lesotho, Mozambique, Botswana and Mauritius (Kajawo, 2012). Plans were that each of the twenty-eight districts will have a community college. In addition to Community Technical Colleges, it was also planned that each Constituency would have a technical and vocational school, namely Community Skills Development Centre. These centres are said to serve learners from the constituency whilst Community Technical Colleges serve learners from the district. According to Ministry of Labour , there are fourteen (14) colleges that are providing training and thirteen others are under construction ETO Project, 2014).

In order to access and make effective use of community colleges' training resources, many workers, particularly those with low-incomes and family responsibilities, need services and supports that go beyond what a college typically provides (Bers & Calhoun, 2002). Compared to a traditional four-year college, a community college has several important advantages for students, including an open admission policy, making it easier to enroll students regardless of their prior academic record; lower tuition and fees; savings on room and board; and a more flexible curriculum and class schedule (Donahoo & Hunter, 2007).

Community Colleges are normally conducted within the beneficiary's communities and desirable catchment areas. This helps in reducing the cost of training on the part of the students. The trainings offered by the colleges benefit the community by increasing skills base in the communities which can be utilised in community development projects and establishment of enterprises (Kemevor & Kassah, 2015).

To ensure sustainability of enterprises, business development and entrepreneurship skills are taught to trainees (Holdaway, 1990). Generally, community colleges facilitate graduates to become self-employed. However, acquisition of skills for wage employment and procession towards the attainment of higher qualifications is always encouraged. It was Malawi government's expectation that the creation of community colleges will help a lot in reducing the prevalence of unemployment among unskilled and unproductive youth.

According to ETO Project(2014), community colleges were also established in order to strengthen community participation in development projects as well as increase income (for the rural masses) and chances of education progression. During the establishment of community colleges, a number of strategic levels were placed in the scope of managing the colleges. There is inter-Ministerial Committee at the top which is a committee responsible for coordination of implementation of TEVET activities and programmes. This committee in seconded by National steering committee which is responsible for policy direction in the functioning of community colleges.

1.1.1 Background of technical education and training in Malawi

Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is the education or training process which involves the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life in addition to general education. TVET comprises formal (organised programmes as part of the school system) and non-formal (organized classes outside the school system) approaches. It is an education and training approach which provides knowledge and skills for employment. TVET uses formal, non-formal and informal learning. TVET is recognised to be a crucial vehicle for social equity, inclusion and sustainable development. In similar reference to TVET, the term technical and vocational skills development (TVSD) is also used to describe the acquisition of knowledge, practical competencies, knowhow and attitudes necessary to perform a certain trade or occupation in the labour market (Danial et al., 2014). The purpose of TVET is to provide training programmes related to employment with a view to enable the transition from secondary education to work for young trainees / students (social objective) and supply the labour market with competent apprentices (economic objective).

TVET is essential to life-long learning and plays a crucial role in providing opportunities for people from all backgrounds, including those who have been marginalised in the labour market (Kemevor & Kassah, 2015). Technical schools work to ensure the provision of quality, accessible and equitable technical and vocational education and trainings. They advocate for a holistic approach based on developing productive capabilities and believe that educational institutions at all levels should provide individuals with a range of knowledge and skills that allow them to not only pursue meaningful work, but also participate fully in all aspects of society.

The Malawi government established the Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocation Training Authority (TEVET) under the TEVET Act, 1999 (Government of Malawi 1999). TEVETA was introduced and became operational in 2000/01 as a regulatory body for TEVET institutions and Community Colleges in the country. As a regulatory body, TEVETA is mandated to regulate, promote and facilitate sustainable provision of quality technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training in Malawi. Training programmes under TEVET follow two approaches; apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship System is a training programme where a person acquires knowledge, skills and attitudes of an occupation from both, a training institution and industry. The critical aspect of this system is the legal agreement that governs the relationship between the trainer or institution and the trainee, in this case referred to as an apprentice and the specified duration of the training one has to undergo. An Apprentice is therefore a person who acquires practical and theoretical knowledge, skills and attitudes in a specific trade through learning and understudying a competent person.

The Formal Apprenticeship Programme is a modular competence based training delivered through registered TEVET provider institutions and industrial attachment. The training program certification is done at levels one to four of achievements, where trainees acquire practical and theoretical knowledge in the occupation of their choice (Government of Malawi 1999). Trainees under this program are called apprentices. The purpose of the Formal Apprenticeship Programme is to generate qualified and competent artisans and technicians for existing and prospective industry, thereby creating both wage and self-employment. The Apprenticeship Training Programme operates on a cost sharing basis. The apprentices pay prescribed tuition and examination fees directly to the training provider institutions, while the TEVET Authority pays a subsidy for the cost of training at the TEVET provider institutions.

Non-Formal apprenticeship system is the other form of education regulated by TEVET. Non-Formal apprenticeship is defined as the transfer of knowledge and skills of an occupation from a craftsperson (a well -trained and skillful person) to an apprentice which takes place spontaneously within an enterprise or workplace. Basically, the method follows a verbal or written agreement and is not guided by any regulation or law, for example, there is no consideration for age and qualification. With this system, there is no set curricula and regulations guiding the training. The learner acquires skills, knowledge, attitudes and gets recognised for attending the training. The training occurs on a broad based institutional level. A qualified trainer or training institution is then identified to facilitate the training for a specified period. After the training, the trainees get relevant certificates of attendance. The common characteristic of these programmes is that they follow an affirmative action and are not regular as are the formal programmes.

TEVET in Malawi is characterised by the existence of supportive public – private partnership. The private sector contributes to TEVET growth by participating in designing and implementing programmes as well as financing through TEVET levy. The first Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training policy was developed in 1998. Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training reviewed its policy in 2013. The policy, therefore, enhances this partnership between the government and private sector. However, the reform of TEVET in Malawi is still in its infancy, as a result, it faces a number of challenges.

The 1998 intervention was to reform TEVET from a supply to a demand-oriented system capable of integrating learning and training occurring in different contextual set-ups. Over the years, TEVET undergone several reforms including establishment of Department of Technical and Vocational Training (DTVT), Establishment of Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) Authority, Establishment of Assessment and Certification Unit at MANEB and introduction of various TEVET curricula.

Situation analysis on the TEVET sector indicates that Malawi is still in its infant stage in TEVET development. According to the World bank (2010), the enrolment into formal TEVET institutions which stands at 35 per 100,000 inhabitants is substantially lower than other SADC countries with Lesotho at 110, Mozambique at 130, Botswana at 1228 and Mauritius at1561. in fact, the unit cost of technical education and training in Malawi is very high as compared to other nations within the SADC region (World Bank, 2010).

1.2 Problem statement

Malawi government introduced Community Technical Colleges in 2014 with the aim of increasing access to Technical Education by the youth. The country has now clocked 8 years since introduction of these Colleges. While this is the case, several reports indicate that technical education sector in Malawi is still meeting so many challenges in meeting its intended goals.

A report by the Ministry of Education (2020) titled 'National Education Sector Investment plan of 2020-2030' revealed that technical education in Malawi is facing so many challenges. Among others, the report cited lack of adequate and relevant infrastructure, geographical access challenge, shortage of qualified instructors, lack of adequate teaching and learning materials, lack of learning infrastructures and inadequate funding among others. On the same, a report by the Ministry of Labor & Man power development reported that inadequate resources is hugely affecting the technical education sector in the country (Government of Malawi, 2014). According to the report, despite increased demand for technical education in the country, the quality of this education has been affected by lack of enough resources in the sector. A 2016 World Bank report indicated that technical education in Malawi is not producing sufficient numbers of qualified artisans. As if this is not enough, 2020-2023 NESIP report reported that technical education in Malawi is facing so many challenges.

On a positive note, there are strides being advanced by the Malawi government to alleviate the problem. Additional community colleges are currently under construction in many districts like Kalinda in Nkhotakota, Mgai in Lilongwe, Mtonga in Ntcheu and Kavinkhama in Mzimba among

others (Government of Malawi, 2014). According to the Government of Malawi (2014), the goal is to have a community college in each and every district of the country. Seemingly, the country is at a risk of creating a crisis to technical education system if the sector continues neglecting the current challenges which technical education is facing.

Therefore, there is a need to appreciate and assess the situation on the ground for community technical colleges with reference to challenges and implications in their operationalisation. However, there has been no formal study aiming at understanding critical challenges and implications faced by community technical colleges since their establishment in the country. There was therefore, a need to conduct this study in order to establish critical issues regarding the challenges faced by community colleges in the country.

Effective management and implementation of CTCs would enhance institution's productivity and competitiveness. However, this does not appear to be the case and the question therefore rises as to the critical issues which hinder effective operationalisation of the CTCs. There has been inadequate information on the essential elements that have been put in place required for their operationalisation. This has been a much neglected research area.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess the critical issues affecting the operationalisation of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi. It also looked at challenges which TEVET trainees are facing in the process of acquiring practical skills and explored ways in which managers and

trainees can cope up with these challenges. The study developed a description of the situation in the country's community colleges with reference to their challenges.

1.4 Research questions

The study intended to answer the main question on 'what critical issues are affecting the operationalisation of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi?' Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What critical issues are affecting College management in the operationalisation of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi?
2. What challenges are faced by TEVET trainees in the process of acquiring practical skills in Community Technical colleges?
3. How can Community Technical Colleges cop up with these critical issues?

1.5 Study Objectives

1.5.1 Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to explore the situation of community colleges through analysis of critical issues and their practical implications in the operationalisation of these Colleges in Malawi.

1.5.2 Specific Objective

Specifically, the study wanted to;

- Assess crucial issues which are affecting college management in the operationalisation of community technical colleges in the country.

- Identify and determine the challenges which TEVET trainees are facing in the process of acquiring practical skills in Community Technical Colleges.

- Explore ways in which Community Technical Colleges can manage and address these critical issues.

1.6 Significance of the study

Since the introduction of community technical colleges in 2014, there has been no formal study which focused on analysing situations of community technical colleges in the country. However, it remains vital to do this analysis and establish critical issues for management as well as trainees. The research aimed at opening an eye for government and all key stakeholders in addressing critical issues affecting community technical colleges. By doing so, the study is significant to the MoL, all other stakeholders and the entire community to understand the challenges which are slowing down the success of Community Technical Colleges as well as ways of bringing up improvement in the operationalisation of these colleges.

1.7 Theoretical framework

The study adopted an administrative management theory that was developed by Henry Fayol in 1916. Henry Fayol (1841-1925) was born in France in 1841 and worked for a coal-mining business. This theory is also known as Fayol's administrative management theory because it was given by Henri Fayol to find a coherent way to plan an organisation. Management theories were

defined by Engelmann (1983) as concepts surrounding recommended management strategies, which may include tools such as frameworks and guidelines that can be implemented in modern organisations. Generally, professionals will not rely solely on one management theory alone, but instead, introduce several concepts from different management theories that best suit their workforce and company culture.

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Henri Fayol developed 14 administrative principles for organisational structure and management which have been used by most high profile organisations up to date. According to Fayol (1930), administrative management theory attempts to find a rational way to design an organization as a whole. The theory generally calls for a formalised administrative structure, a clear division of labour, delegation of power and authority to administrators relevant to their areas of responsibilities (Lumby & Coleman, 2007) . The administrative theory of management is focused on principles that could be used by managers to coordinate the internal activities of organisations. He believed that organizational managerial practices are important for driving predictability and efficiency in organisations.
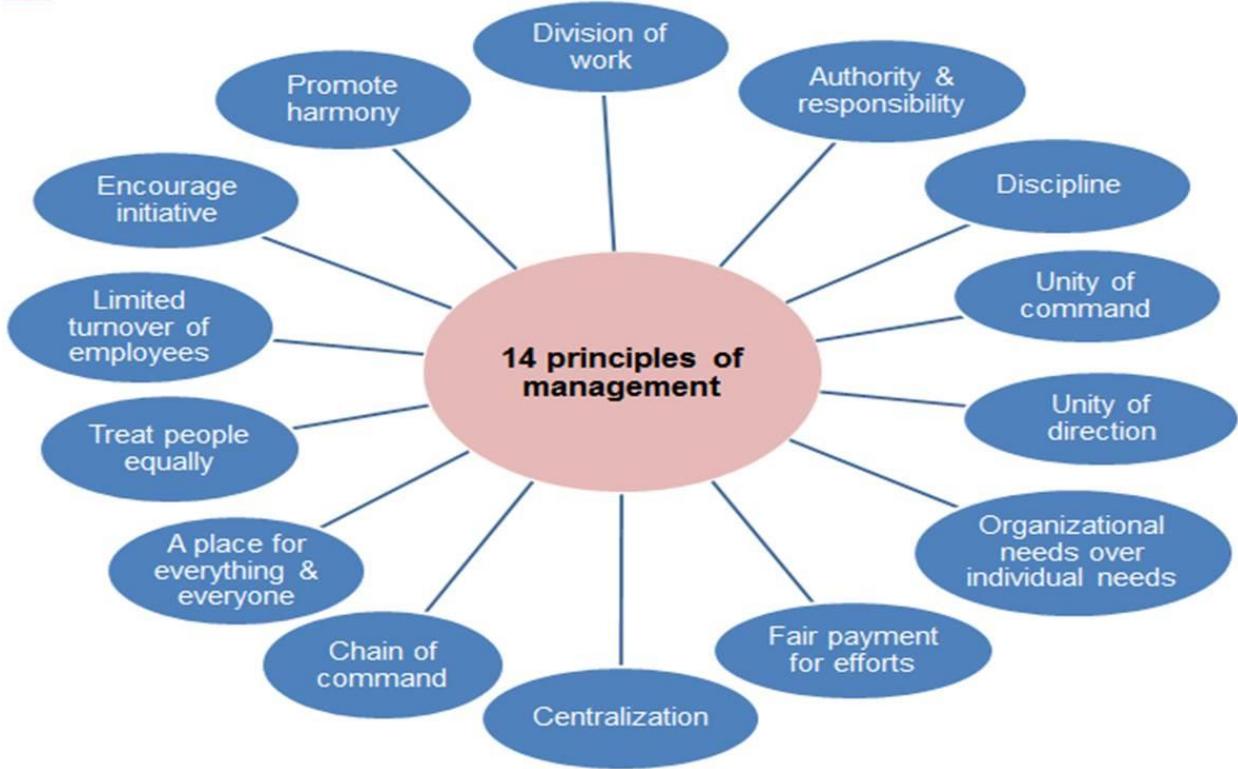
Figure. 1.1: Principles of management Henry Fayol (1916)

The researcher was interested in a number of management principles. These include discipline, authority and responsibility, Organizational needs over individual needs, chain of command and division of labour. These key principles were of paramount interest because of their nature and applicability in Community Technical Colleges setting.

To begin with, discipline principle states that discipline is required for any organisation to run effectively (Brooks, 2009). In order to have disciplined employees, managers need to build a culture of mutual respect (Fayol, 1949).

There should be a set of organisational rules, philosophies and structures in place that should be met by everyone. Armstrong (2006) opined that bending rules or slacking should not be allowed in any organisation. In order to achieve this, there is a need for good supervision and impartial judgment.

Division of labor as a principle of management is based on the theory that if an employee is given a specific task to do, they will become more efficient and skilled in it (Degnegaard et al., 2010). According to Tomlinson (2004), this is opposed to a multi-tasking culture where an employee is given so many tasks to do at once. Some authors agree that in order to implement this principle effectively, institutions should look at the current skill sets of each employee and assign them a task that they can become proficient at (Fayol, 1930, 1949; Smith, 2015). Furthermore, Illeris (2018) believed by this will help them to become more productive, skilled and efficient in the long run. Under this principle the researcher was interested in understanding how roles are shared to management, members of staff as well as trainees.

On unity of Command, Fayol (1930, 1949) stated that work to be done should be organised in such a way that employees work in harmony towards the same objective, using one plan, under the direction of one manager (Langford, 2004). An example is given of marketing activities such as advertising, budgeting, sales promotion, etc., there should be one manager using one plan for all the marketing activities.

1.8 Scope of the study and delimitations

The study was conducted in the Central region of Malawi. Data was collected at 3 community technical colleges namely; Mponera CTC in Dowa, Mbandira in Nkhotakota and Lithipe CTC in Salima. Participants to the study were Community College Management (Principals and deputy Principals), Teachers, trainees and graduates from the three Community Technical Colleges.

1.9 Geography and research population

At the time of the study, there were five community technical colleges operational in the central region. These are Kapondo in Mchinji, Mponela in Dowa, Chongoni in Dedza, Mbandira in Nkhotakota and Lithipe in Salima. The study participants came from 3 selected Community Technical Colleges out of the 5 in the central region, and these are out of the 15 community Technical Colleges currently operational in the country.

1.10 Thesis structure

This section narrates how the thesis has been structured. As seen above, this chapter one has introduction and background information to this study. Review of literature follows after this chapter. Chapter three presents research methodology. Findings of the study have been placed in the fourth Chapter while chapter five presents discussions of the findings. The thesis ends with chapter six which covers research conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature written on a number of areas that relate to the study. This include literature written on common challenges faced by Technical education as well as common challenges faced by trainees in acquiring skills in the technical field.

2.2 Review on common management challenges faced by technical education

It must be pointed out again that there has been no study which has looked at Community technical colleges in the country. As such, the researcher looked at a number of relevant studies which took place in other countries.

A qualitative study by Basham et al. (2012) examined critical issues facing community colleges in America and focused on understanding best processes of organisational management, especially in difficult times. Appreciative inquiry was selected as the foundational research methodology for this study. During the study, several focus groups were held at the annual Community College Futures Assembly. Among others, the study established that there were faculty administration communication problems. This was backed by historical support from previous Community College future assembly research sessions. Communication is said to be one attribute rating which historically is the lowest leadership competence. The findings are in line with Miles et al. (2014) who advises that communication strategies create a much stronger bond between parents, teachers and management to form a strong community that work together to produce the best in education.

Professional development for all was also reported as a recurring issue. In education, the term professional development may be used in reference to a wide variety of specialised training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators, improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. As described by Bosetti and Heffernan (2021), benefits of professional development include the expansion of one's knowledge base and can expose both young and experienced professionals to new ideas, solidify their knowledge and increase their expertise in their field.

The issue of professional development cannot be said to be America's challenge alone. If developed countries are struggling to achieve this, a lot can be said about how intense this problem is for developing countries, especially in Africa. The issue of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is mentioned in Malawi's National Education Sector Investment plan of 2020-2030 as a key area guiding the implementation of In-Service training and career progression of Malawi teachers.

A study by Inyiagu (2014) explored the challenges facing technical and vocational education in Nigeria. The challenges that needed TVET Intervention and International Trends in Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET), were discussed. Inyiagu (2014) found that one of the critical challenges in managing technical education in Nigeria is the slow development of a competent workforce and lack of sustained economic growth in the global economy. He recognised that human resource development, through well planned education and training initiatives can contribute significantly to promoting the interests of individuals, enterprises, economy and society within the nation (Inyiagu, 2014). The primary objective of all TVET programmes is said as the acquisition of relevant knowledge, practical skills and attitudes for

employment in a particular trade or occupational area. Skills acquisition is vital for an economy to compete and grow, particularly in an era of economic integration, transformation and technological change (Kim et al., 2018).

Inyiagu (2014) observed that the neglect of technical and vocational education over the years may have contributed to the high unemployment and rising poverty among the youth, because many of them lack the basic job skills. He was much worried over this as one way of reducing poverty is to ensure sustainable job creation through TVET. Inyiagu's (2014) study revealed major challenges that TVET was facing and needed government intervention. It was generalised that TVET faces challenges of meeting the changing demands of today's industries and the new challenges posed by the global economic environment. Inyiagu (2014) describes integration of education and workplace, uncertainty and anxiety, preparing young people for life and information, and communication technology as some of the challenges that need TVET intervention.

Inyiagu (2014) concluded by highlighting key strategies being used by other countries in promoting quality and job creation. The key strategies included promotion and marketing of TVET as a viable alternative to the more traditional mode of advancement and education. He suggested that this could be done through the integration of competency-based training with academia, both at the secondary and tertiary level, establishment of a National Qualification Framework for education, and training that include all levels from pre-primary to post-graduate.

Findings reported by Inyiagu (2014) can be linked to the technical education system of Malawi. First and for most, it is important to appreciate that the problem of youth unemployment is part of a much larger problem of ineffective labour market. However, it is also understood that neglecting technical and vocational education and training has afflicted much on the African continent, including Malawi. It is also the root cause of unemployment in general, and youth unemployment in particular. Therefore, a starting point ought to be a strategy that aims at providing technical education to the whole population in order to ensure that skills acquisitions are deeply rooted in the mind of Malawi youths. This article is therefore, a call for all key stakeholders and the government to think of strategies of bringing in reforms which will ensure that technical education is imparted to promote self-reliance and skills development.

Beharry-Ramraj (2016) investigated challenges to management practices in public TVET colleges in the KwaZulu-Natal Province is South Africa. The findings of the study revealed that the significance of TVET colleges has been known for some time relative to the need for economic development of countries. In this context, these institutions have experienced challenges that inhibit their normal functioning. Beharry-Ramraj (2016) acknowledged the significance of TVET in skills development in literature. The study undertook to examine the management practices in relation to the challenges faced by TVET sector in one of the leading provinces in the republic of South Africa (Beharry-Ramraj, 2016). He analysed the statistical findings using the regression analysis in the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) as well as content analysis.

The study pointed financial constraints, low throughput rates, inadequate lecturer qualifications, poor teaching environment, poor facilities and limited oversight procedures in relation to the governance of colleges, as some of the challenges in the colleges (Beharry-Ramraj, 2016). Unlike in the past, it was stated that the principals are expected to possess managerial skills from the department of education as well as from other stakeholders. This pointed to the need for effective skills development.

Beharry-Ramraj's (2016) study emphasised on the need for effective management and demonstrated the need within the framework of four constructs: leadership, governance, change management and staff development. According to Beharry-Ramraj (2016), revived TVET figure was credited to the figure developed in this study towards effective management using the above four constructs. A figure comprising the four constructs holistically was said to be necessary in the effective management of TVETs. A management house model was developed in light of existing TVET challenges. The educational policy makers and institutions were presented with a model figure necessary for effective management and would benefit from its usage.

As discussed in Beharry-Ramraj's (2016) study, the high levels of unemployment, skills shortages and increasing demand for quality education, challenges the management of community colleges to respond rapidly and positively. One step to achieve this is through clear understanding of issues or challenges faced by our community colleges. Studies need to be done in order to assess the current management issues, in relation to many challenges faced by TEVET colleges. Theses statement are consistent with the research objective of this study which is to analyse the situation

of Community colleges in Malawi in relation to critical issues and implication in operationalisation of these colleges.

On the same, the challenges observed Beharry-Ramraj's (2016) study are likely going to appear in the Malawi education context. For example, inadequate lecturer qualifications, poor teaching environment, poor facilities are never new challenges to the education system of Malawi. However, the current study did not use mixed methods approach as was done by Beharry-Ramraj. The current study adopted a pure qualitative approach and therefore used a qualitative research design. The researcher opined that the qualitative research design was an ideal design for the current study in a bid of understanding the in-depth issues surrounding the matter.

Woyo (2013) discussed challenges facing TVET institutions in producing competent graduates in Zimbabwe. The thrust of the study was to make an exploration of the challenges that TVET institutions face as they try to produce competent and qualified graduates. The study also examined the challenges which were being faced by TVET graduates in acquiring competencies for the occupations they were being trained for. The main challenges revealed that there was lack of training materials for the various workshops, obsolete training equipment, large classes, inadequate learning facilities and poor exposure for the TVET trainees (Woyo, 2013).

In his conclusion, Woyo (2013) discovered that TVET institutions in Zimbabwe were facing a number of challenges and recommended that TVET institutions must forge a strategic plan. another recommendation made by the study was that TVET institutions must put structures for research and innovation in place and encourage its trainees a culture of doing research work. The

study also encouraged TVET institutions to forge synergies with industry and vigorously promote on-the job training as a way of enhancing competencies of graduates.

What is more interesting about these studies is the fact that they all acknowledge the powers of technical education in skills development among the youth. Technical education is a tool to lifting up our economies. Countries rely on skilled youths who can work and produce the required results for the development of industries. However, the issue of professional development (on-the job training) and inadequate learning materials, keeps appearing. Most studies reviewed in this discussion have captured the two as challenges in technical college's education systems.

2.3 Common challenges in skills acquisition

2.3.1 Utilisation of instructional facilities in electronics in Nigeria

Asukwo (2018) conducted a study on the utilisation of instructional facilities in electronics workshop practice and maintenance for students' acquisition of trade skills in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study findings revealed that technical colleges are charged with the goals of providing trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels; providing the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development and imparting the necessary skills to individuals for self-reliance economically.

Asukwo (2018) described the then state of recession and rate of unemployment bedeviling the country of Nigeria as a major problem for the government which had not been able to proffer a

solution as expected. More alarming was the number of electronics workshop practice and maintenance graduates of technical colleges seen roaming the streets in search of white collar jobs in an era where almost everything is electronic due to technological advancement. Asukwo (2018) found that young technical college graduates find it difficult to get a job or become self-reliant because they lack the requisite trade skills required for diagnosing, repairing and maintaining an electronic system even when much emphasis has been made by the government of Nigeria on TVET in the provision of machineries, equipment, tools and materials for effective training in the technical colleges.

The questions in mind were what could be the cause of this undesired outcome. Where the instructional facilities are available, are they being utilised? How often are the available instructional facilities utilised? What are the challenges inhibiting the use of the available instructional facilities? This was related to an observation by Heinecke and Okobia (2011) who indicated that while some educators are fascinated by the potential of instructional materials in enhancing teaching and learning, other teachers lagged behind in using instructional materials to teach. This necessitated the study on utilisation of instructional facilities in electronics workshop practice and maintenance for students' acquisition of trade skills in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. The study found that only a few equipment and tools were often utilised in in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. The study further revealed that both male and female NTCIII students shared similar views on the extent of utilisation of equipment, tools and consumables in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

Based on the findings, the study recommended that trainings should be organised for teachers so that they could update their skills for effective utilisation of instructional facilities in electronics workshop practice and maintenance (Asukwo, 2018). Workshops and seminars should be organised on the importance and benefits of utilisation of instructional facilities in technical colleges. Also, Heads of Trade should carryout regular supervision during practical hours to ensure the effective utilisation of instructional facilities for teaching and that modern tools and equipment should be adequately supplied and maintained regularly for improving the utilisation of requisite trade skills in electronics workshop practice and maintenance in technical colleges.

It is obvious that acquisition of skills in any field is associated with the availability of materials related to the field of study. Technical skills acquisition cannot be separated from having proper workshops and equipment which will help trainees in acquiring industry skills which are employable. As recommended in this study, teachers/instructors need to be properly trained so that they can update their skills for effective utilisation of instructional facilities.

In addition, Asukwo's (2018) study recommended study that heads of trade should carryout regular supervision during practical hours to ensure the effective utilisation of instructional facilities for teaching in electronics workshop practice and maintenance in technical colleges. Supervision of practical sessions is indeed important for teachers to ascertain that much needed skills are being acquired by trainees. As such, it is agreed with the recommendation from this study that teachers as well as heads of departments need to be available during practical sessions to see how trainers

are making use of available instructional resources in the workshop. This is very important in making sure that trainees are acquiring the required skills.

Furthermore, the study recommended that tools and equipment should be adequately supplied and maintained regularly for improving its utilisation of requisite trade skills in electronics workshop practice and maintenance in technical colleges. For the purposes of better understanding of the concept, tools and equipment need to be available for all courses offered by a technical college. Courses like brick-laying, carpentry and joinery, motor vehicle mechanic, electrical installation and many others, have their own materials which are necessary in assisting learners to acquire skills in their respective field. It is therefore very important that technical colleges have these resources to assist in requisition of knowledge and skills by trainees in technical colleges.

2.3.2 Issues confronting technical institute graduates in practical skills acquisition

Dasmani (2011) explored and described the challenges confronting technical institute graduates in practical skills acquisition in the upper region of Ghana. In the background, he appreciated Sub-Saharan African government's efforts in promoting TVET with the belief that skill formation enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy. Dasmani (2011) agreed with other researcher's observations that in recent years, concerns have been raised by most African countries about the move towards making TVET complementary to post-basic education. He pointed out that one of the most important features of TVET, as recognised by African governments, is its orientation towards the world of work with the curriculum emphasising the acquisition of employable skills.

Dasmani (2011) learnt that despite the various interventions to ensure that technical institute graduates are well equipped with the requisite practical skills for the job market and the campaign about the benefits of TVET, it has not attracted the youth in the region to move into TVET at all because most technical graduates have not been able to enter into employment in their respective fields of training. Also, the poor transition from school to work by the youth has a large group of TVET graduates, who were mostly teenagers, leave to the southern part of Ghana for menial jobs. Dasmani (2011) advocated that the then trend of affairs may suggest that training programmes offered by the technical institutes probably fail to develop the skills required for employment within the region and beyond.

The study was significant because it revealed the issues and problems relating to practical skills training among technical institutes in the Upper East region. It also offered suggestions and recommendations to address these problems. The study revealed that lack of resources has led to cuts in the volume of training which was expected to be provided in technical institutes (Dasmani, 2011). These cuts are a hindrance to a pursuit of the critical objectives of providing training and subsequent job placement of technical institute graduates. Considering the expensive nature of TVET as a form of education, it is sensible to reason that TVET systems become effective if resources are adequately supplied to match the expanding intake. Furthermore, Dasmani (2011) found that teachers are highly motivated to teach practical skills when there is a regular supply of instructional materials thus ensuring active participation of trainees.

Dasmani's (2011) study also found that the linkage between the technical institutes on the one hand and the industry on the other, is not strong enough. The technical institutes have not been able to access opportunities for industrial attachment for both teachers and students. As a result, the practical skill training is not closely related to the requirements at the world of work. Technical institute graduates lacked the requisite skills for the job market, so had few chances of gaining employment. This situation left many of the technical graduates unemployed. In addition, the study discovered that large class sizes do not match with inadequate supply and provision of training resources such that these inadequacies negatively affect the necessary skills for the world of work. It was also concluded that the importance of industrial attachment is relegated in priority. This seriously affects training with a resulting mismatch with job market expectations.

With reference to the findings, Dasmani (2011) made a number of recommendations. First, all stakeholders should contribute in providing adequate training materials to address the short supply of training materials and basic hand tools for skills training in the two technical institutes. Second, final year students and all females in the male-dominated programmes should be encouraged to possess own basic hand tools. Technical institutes were also advised to discourage large class sizes and there should be efforts to secure more facilities to match the upsurge of student intake into technical institutes. In addition, technical institutes should ensure that practical lessons are both effective and efficient to achieve the desired result of imparting the practical skills necessary for the world of work. In order to realise quality in practical skill training, the researcher recommended that technical institutes should promote industrial attachment programmes for both staff and students. Lastly, it was recommended that two technical institutes should introduce a tool-acquisition scheme under the production unit system. This scheme was thought to encourage

students to enter into self-employment at the end of their course. By means of this scheme, the students would use the incomes realised from the income-generating activities they undertake to acquire basic tools for themselves (Dasmani, 2011). This arrangement, over a specified period, could assist trainees to acquire some basic tools to help them take off smoothly in the world of work, especially in the area of self-employment individually or co-operatively on a micro- or small-scale basis.

As reported by Dasmani (2011), lack of resources negatively affects skills acquisition. It is known that learning resource materials make remarkable enhancement of lesson impact. To a larger extent, the availability of a wide variety of instructional resources can stimulate the interest and actively engage learners in the learning. One specific objective of this study was to identify and determine the challenges which TVET trainees were facing in the process of acquiring practical skills in Community Technical colleges. It was researcher's supposition that Community Technical Colleges lack adequate learning resources which could assist in skills acquisition for trainees. The researcher agreed with almost all recommendations made in this study regarding what needs to be done so that skills acquisition is improved for our trainees in Technical colleges.

2.3.3 Factors influencing the acquisition of employability skills by students

Danial et al. (2014) conducted a study on factors influencing the acquisition of employability skills by students of selected technical schools in Malaysia. The study revealed the notion that development of information technology shifts in the types and nature of available jobs and changes in the world economy require people to adapt quickly to the needs of the world of work.

Thus, governments of many nations have striven to educate and train the human capital to address these challenges (Danial et al., 2014). This included Malaysia, a developing nation that aspires to be recognised as industrialised and to create a high-income society. In order to achieve those goals, he advised that the country must ensure a large pool of high skilled workers by increasing enrollment in TVET education programme.

The study was conducted in order to determine how the implementation of TVET in a selected technical school has helped students acquire employability skills. Scholars also wanted to determine the relationship between student's level of employability skills and selected factors as well as to determine the predictors of students' employability acquisition.

The study by Danial et al. (2014) found that the employability skills of vocational secondary school students are moderately high (M = 3.81, SD = 0.34). The scholars pointed out that the development of employability skills among students is important for the future of the nation. As a result of new development in the world of work, one cannot remain static in one specific organisation. People move from one organisation to another based on their employability skills. Borrowing the concept of protean career, where one drives his or her career and invents his or her own career over time. Moreover, the need for employability skills is much stronger and more significant.

On the same, it was also found that industrial training experience related to the acquisition of employability skills is very helpful. That is to say, experience gained through work placement successfully develops a range of transferable personal skills.

Overall, the study illustrated that students' employability skills were at average level. Since these skills are vital for their future, there is need for improvement to be made. Thus, the implementation and development of employability skills in the vocational curriculum in technical schools should be widely practiced.

The findings to the study also showed that factors such as self-concept, curriculum and career exposure are associated with employability skills. Thus, the public, educators and parents need to realise the importance of these variables that can bolster the performance of students as they enter the workforce (Danial et al., 2014). It was narrated that there are other factors that may contribute to the formation of students' employability skills and as such, educational institutions must take certain steps such as reviewing, planning, and implementing strategies for improving and developing the employability skills of their students.

The study recommended TVED, Ministry of Education and industries to work together to create innovative policies to uphold technical and vocational education. The scholars narrated that voluntary organisations either within or outside the country, that are willing to offer places and facilities for students to develop their employability skills are very much needed. Therefore, parties were encouraged to work together to enable youth and students to receive training or skills relevant to industrial needs. Danial et al. (2014) concluded that vocational students in Malaysia had a moderately high level of employability skills, which was influenced by students' self-perception, their level of industrial training and their participation in career development activities.

Therefore, the important factors to be highlighted within the school environment include the formation of positive self-concept, involvement in extracurricular activities and the engagement of students in related industries (Danial et al., 2014). The study suggested the practice of formation of a professional body to coordinate the implementation of employability skills regarding teaching and learning activities inside and outside the classroom. Lastly, the study suggested that studies of an experimental nature to investigate the effects of industrial training and other school activities should be carried out in vocational schools to gain a clear understanding about what is needed ahead.

The Malawi government developed a policy document that stipulates the plans and vision of the government in the establishment of Community Colleges in Malawi. According to the policy document, the Malawi government envisions to increase access to technical education among out of the school youth and adults, and increasing skill base in the community which can be utilised in community development projects and establishment of enterprises was envisioned as the main benefits of these colleges (Government of Malawi, 2014). The documents also set out strategies for establishing these colleges. Among others, there would be inter-ministerial committee, National steering committee (NSC), technical working group, district management committees and college management committees with each and every committee allocated its specific responsibilities.

Section 6.0 of the policy document looked at challenges (risks) which community colleges are going to experience and ways (mitigation) of dealing with the challenges (Government of Malawi, 2014). The researcher appreciates that most of the listed challenges were indeed common challenges faced by community colleges as researched by scholars in other countries. The risk and mitigation section listed challenges like inadequate financial resources, lack of coordination in the provision of vocational skills, lack of capacity in the community and long procurement procedures. However, the concept document only provided very short answers to these risks. For example, the document simply state that inadequate financial resources will be dealt with through involvement of Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, in conjunction with development partners and the private sector. One can still ask so many questions as to how practical will this be. It also states that lack of capacity in the communities will be solved through the provision of Capacity development. This as well leaves one with so many questions as to who, how and when will this be done. It was a good idea to discuss possible challenges and ways of dealing with this. However, this document could have benefited Malawian community colleges if practical solutions were fully described. The document could have been a good reference point when such challenges arise but as it is, it is difficult for college manager to make full use of it.

2.4 Chapter summary

Equipping trainees with employable skills can be said to be the core objective of technical education. Technical education is there to prepare students for jobs involving the application of skills and modern technologies. Technical education graduates are expected to possess employable skills as they graduate from their technical schools to industries. However, due to a number of

reasons, most graduates only possess average employable skills. There is need to put effort in improving this.

As discussed in most of the studies reviewed above, technical education has been experiencing several challenges. Problems like underfunding, poor equipment and irrelevant industries linked curriculum largely affects this sector. As highlighted in several studies, authorities have a lot of work to do in improving the acquisition of employable skills in technical education graduates as well as lifting the standard of education in these colleges. Despite the fact that almost all these studies took place outside Malawi, a number of factors/issues can be said to be true in the Malawian context.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describe the research methodology that was used in the study which aimed at assessing situation of CTCs. It specifies the research philosophy, approach, research design, and the strategy on which the study centred. This was followed by a description of the population under study, population sampling, data collection techniques and data analysis.

3.2 Research methodology

This study focused on the participants' lived experiences and consciousness. As such, the study adopted phenomenology as its research methodology. In order to critically inquire detailed descriptions of college managers, teachers and trainees' lived experiences, the study adopted descriptive type of phenomenology research approach. This enabled the researcher to focus on subject experience, had emphasis on present moment and enabled access use of intuition as these benefits are offered by phenomenological study approach (Crano et al., 2014).

3.3 Research philosophy

This study used constructivism research paradigm. Constructivism philosophical paradigm, developed by Jean Piaget, asserts that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. The basis is on the analogy that people form or construct much of what they learn through experience (Stockemer, 2019). In this line, the researcher obtained answers of the study's research questions from its

participants who shared their experiences. Data collection instruments usually used in this philosophical paradigm include interview, observation, focus groups, documents analysis and visual data analysis (Locharoenrat, 2017). The researcher used interviews and focus group discussions as data collection tools.

3.4 Research strategy and methods

As pointed out previously, this study adopted a purely qualitative approach. The study explored and provided deeper insights into real-world problems. Qualitative research provides a chance for researchers to get data from lived or felt experiences depending on how people make sense out of their lives (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The approach was suitable as it helped the researcher to preserve the voice and perspective of participants. The study gathered participants' experiences, perceptions and behaviour. The study design was case study design. As defined by Frankael (2015), case study design is a research design that is used to gain in-depth knowledge about a specific real world subject in its context. It is a detailed study of a specific subject, such as a person, group, place, event, organization, or phenomenon. The study had multiple cases since more than one CTC was involved.

3.5 Setting/sites

This study took place in the central region of Malawi. The central region has five community colleges which are currently in operational. These Community Colleges are Mponera in Dowa, Kapondo in Mchinji, Chongoni in Dedza, Mbandira in Nkhotakota and Salima in Salima district.

Central region was chosen because currently it has good number of community colleges in operation. The researcher considered data collection costs when selecting the sites since the study was self-sponsored.

3.6 Study population

Participants to this study included college principals, teachers, trainees as well as graduates from selected Community Technical Colleges. The researcher wanted to hear from 8 management members from the selected colleges. It was in the researcher's plan to interview 9 teachers with an average of about 3 teachers per community college. The researcher conducted focus group discussions with 20 trainees as well as 5 graduates who graduated from the three colleges. As recommended by (Marczyk et al., 2005), the researcher considered this to be within the required range of sample size which can give a true reflection of realities on the ground. This sample size was also determined by looking at the population of participants in the study.

3.7 Sample techniques and sampling criteria

Principals, teachers, graduates and trainees were the sample frame of the study. Taherdoost (2016) defines sampling frame as the group of people from which the researcher draws a sample. For the purpose of selecting trainees' participants in the study, simple random sampling method was used as all trainees were given equal chance of participating in this study. Convenience sampling was used to select management members, teachers and graduates as this enabled the researcher to select college managers, teachers and graduates who were convenient and easily accessible.

3.8 Data collection instruments

The following table illustrates participant's category and the data collection instrument which was used.

Table 3.1: Data collection tool - Interviews

S/N	Category of participants	Population Size	Population sample	Sampling technique	Sampling type
1	Management team	8	6	Non-probability	Purposive sampling
2	Graduates	15	5	Non-Probability	Purposive sampling

Table 3.2: Data collection tool - Focus group discussions

S/N	Category of participants	Population Size	Population sample	Sampling technique	Sampling type
1	Academic staff	36	12	Non-probability	Purposive sampling
2	Trainees	50	20	Non-probability	Purposive sampling

As indicated in the tables, data was collected using interviews and interview guides were used (see appendices 4 and 6). An interview is a data collection method in which an interviewer (the researcher or someone working for the researcher) asks questions of an interviewee who provides

data. This being a qualitative research, the researcher used semi structured interviews because they can systematically probe for in-depth information from participants. The interview contained open-ended questions, this kind of interview is also called a depth interview because it collects in-depth information about the participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivation and feelings about a topic

Data was also collected using focus group discussions and focus group discussion guides were used (refer to appendices 5 and 7). A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research data collection method in which a group of people from similar backgrounds or experiences come together to discuss a specific topic of interest (Gay & Mills, 2016). . The group is guided by a Focus group discussions enabled the researcher to obtain diverse set of responses from the participants. On the same, the open ended nature of focus group discussion enabled the researcher to explore unanticipated topics.

3.9 Data analysis

The key stage of any qualitative data analysis requires reading through all the data in order to get the overall meaning, tone and depth of the information obtained (Creswell, 2009). Participants' responses were read through in detail in order to draft the various categories for coding.

Cohen et al. (2011) observe that the researcher determines data analysis procedures right at the planning stages, and ensures that these are consistent with relationships specified in the research objectives or questions. In accordance with these principles, the data analysis process in this study

was an iterative and reflexive process which involved the categorisation and manipulation of data to find answers to the original research questions. Stockermer (2019) view qualitative data collection, interpretation and analysis as a simultaneous process. In relation to sentiments by Cohen et al (2011), the researcher commenced the data analysis process right from data collection phase, by interpreting and writing in order to avoid being overwhelmed by voluminous data at the end. Using an inductive data analysis approach, the researcher identified important data categories as well as patterns and relationships through a process of discovery (Locharoenra, 2017).

Data analysis demands that researchers live with or get immersed in the research data. Data analysis is therefore, carried out to safeguard the distinctiveness of individual participants' experiences while at the same time allowing a clear understanding of the problem being studied to emerge. This starts by listening to participants' explanations and then checking and reading the transcriptions verbatim (Crano, 2014).

Data collected was transcribed word by word by listening to the recorded audio. The transcripts were later substantiated with gathered notes from the focus group discussions and interviews. Data was latter coded guided by research objectives without moving out of the guiding conceptual framework. Data coding is described as the process of driving codes from the observed data (Cleff, 2014). Thematic approach allowed the researcher to approach large data sets more easily by sorting them into broad themes. While conducting this process, the researcher sightsaw more literature and came up with repetitive issues mentioned by respondents. It is these issues that formed the basis of arguments in the discussions and drawn conclusions.

3.10 Issues of trustworthiness and quality

The researcher was very well aware of how important issues of trustworthiness and quality were to this study. In order to achieve issues of trustworthiness and quality, triangulation was used. Triangulation can be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour (Johnston-Wilder, 2011). It is the use of multiple methods to collect and analyse data on the same subject (Miles et al., 2014). By combining different types of data sources, triangulation assisted in making sure that there was trustworthiness and quality in the study findings.

In addition, trustworthiness of the research was established using respondent validation. In qualitative research, a member check, also known as informant feedback or respondent validation is a technique used to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity and transferability (also known as applicability, internal validity, or fittingness) of a study (Miles et al., 2014). This basically involved checking of the initial responses with the participants in order to see that the results are true.

3.11 Research ethical procedures

The researcher understood the importance of ethical issues in a research and how the same matters. In order to make sure that rights, dignity and welfare of participants are protected, a number of research ethical principles were followed.

The researcher sought ethical clearance from Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC, refer to appendix 2.). A consent letter to collect data was given by the University (see appendix 1). All participants to the study were asked for consent before involving them (see appendix 3). Alaafin, (2018) emphasized the need of getting informed consent and voluntary research participation of participants, Alaafin articulates that participants should be adequately informed about the research and should be allowed to have the power and freedom to decide whether to participate or decline.

3.11.1 Confidentiality

Confidential information was protected in this study. The researcher provided accurate information to potential participants and abide by the agreement made with the participant about how the study accessed, used, transferred, stored and presented their information (English, 2006). The researcher took several steps to ensure confidentiality of participants' information, including use of participant codes to label data instead of using names and keeping a separate list of code-to-name match-ups.

3.11.2 Informed consent

The researcher asked for consent before engaging participants to the study. Informed consent meant that participants knowingly, voluntarily and intelligently gave consent to participate in this research. This is much related to autonomous right to the individual to participate in the study as recommended by (Holdaway, 1990). Participants to the study were informed about the research objective and their role in the study

3.11.3 Privacy

Privacy is assured when an individual has the freedom to decide on the time and the extent to which private information will or will not be disclosed. The study therefore, protected participants' privacy and integrity as deserved. This was achieved by ensuring that all agreements and promises were fulfilled. The researcher did not create false expectation or false promises to participants.

As pointed out by Taherdoost (2016), research participants needed to be respected. This involved making sure that those who were capable of deliberation about their personal goals should be treated with respect for their capacity for self-determination and protection of persons with impaired or diminished autonomy, something which required that those who were dependent or vulnerable be afforded security against harm or abuse.

Discrimination was also avoided in this study. The researcher did not intend to discriminate any participant to this study on any basis be it age, sex or ethnicity or any other factor. This is understood as violation of human rights, something which was not related to the study.

3.12 Chapter summary (conclusion)

In summary, the study was qualitative in nature and adopted phenomenological research approaches. As justified above, the study used constructivism research paradigm as developed by Jean Piaget. Participants to this study were college managers, teachers, trainees and graduates. Simple random sampling and convenience sampling were both used when selecting participants

to the study. The study applied thematic data analysis approach. Issues of trustworthiness and quality were taken care of using triangulation and respondent validation. Research ethical procedures were addressed by maintaining confidentiality, use of consent forms and avoidance of any form of discrimination.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the findings of the study guided by the research questions. It presented data collected from College instructors, managers, trainees and former trainees from three CTCs in the central region namely; Mponera, Lithipe and Mbandira Community Technical College. It also highlighted how data was analysed. The focus of this study was to assess critical challenges faced by college management in the operationalisation of CTCs, challenges faced by trainees in the process of acquiring skills and brings out suggestions and recommendations on how CTCs can manage and address the identified critical issues. The study was designed to answer the following research questions

1. What are the critical issues affecting College management in the operationalisation of Community Technical Colleges in the Malawi?

2. What are the challenges faced by TEVET trainees in the process of acquiring practical skills in Community Technical colleges?

3. How can Community Technical Colleges cop up or address these critical issues?

4.2 Data Analysis

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of how data was analysed. The second part presents the findings from instructors as well as principals of Community Technical Colleges. In some instances, verbatim accounts were provided to stress on the facts being presented.

This is consistent with what Cleff (2014) said, that words are powerful conveyors of meaning, perhaps more powerful than statistics. Therefore, the use of quotations or actual statements from data make this research more meaningful and significant to the reader as it reveals insight into the actual social setting to which the reader may relate.

While presenting data, it is important to comment on the questions that were used during interviews and focus group discussions, and why they were used. The questions were directed at getting experiences and views on critical issues which are and have been affecting CTCs. The aim was to get the participants to speak out their experiences and views on operationalisation of CTCs. In other words, the researcher wanted to move from general issues to specific and particular ones.

At some point, researcher chose some key areas and asked participants to provide their views concerning these areas. The key areas included quality and number of teachers and supporting staff in CTCs, teaching and learning resources, enrolment of trainees, staff motivation, funding and general academic performance of students. Participants were given a chance to give and explain any critical issue which they thought was affecting operationalisation of CTCs. Each and every discussion or interview started with getting general background information about the school from College principals.

Since this study adopted qualitative research design, qualitative analytical technics were used. Participant's views and experiences regarding critical issues affecting operationalisation of CTCs were coded and located within the text using qualitative analysis. Notes were taken and a recorder

was used to record the interviews and focus group discussions. Collected data was analysed using thematic approach system. Data was closely examined to identify themes, topic and patterns of meaning that came repeatedly. Thematic approach allowed the researcher to approach large data more easily by sorting them into broad themes.

The interview questions were guided by sub research questions and theories. These assisted the researcher to come up with themes. The following were the sub-themes that emerged from the research questions and audio recordings from the interviews and focus discussions.

Theme 1; Perceived critical issues affecting college management in the operationalization of CTCs

- Sub-Theme 1: College management views on staffing of instructors and supporting staff

- Theme 2. College management views on funding of CTCs

- Theme 3: College Principals views on infrastructure challenges

- Theme 4: College teachers' views on work motivation

- Theme 5. College teachers' views on monitoring and supervision (by the government)

- Theme 6: College principals and teachers' views leadership challenges in CTCs

- Theme 7: College principals and teachers' views on trainees' enrolment

Theme 2; Challenges faced by trainees in the process of acquiring skills

- Theme 8. Teachers and trainees' views on teaching and learning resources

- Theme 9: Teachers views on induction of teachers

- Theme 10. Teachers views on trainings and professional development for teachers

- Theme 11-Trainees views on career path for students

- Theme 12-Trainees views on staffing numbers of teachers

- Theme 13. Trainees views on boarding facilities challenges

Theme 3; Suggested ways of addressing critical issues

- Theme 14. Principals and teachers' views on addressing funding challenges in CTCs

- Theme 15: Principals and Teachers views on addressing Shortage of teachers challenges in CTCs

- Theme 16: Teachers and trainees' views on addressing enrolment of trainees challenges

- Theme 17: Teachers and trainees' views on addressing teaching and learning resources problem

4.3 Theme 1; Critical issues affecting college management in the operationalization of community technical colleges.

4.3.1 Sub-Theme 1: College management views on staffing of instructors and supporting staff

The participants were asked to state staffing levels of CTCs in general and relate this to their institution. All principals indicated that CTCs are understaffed and this is one of major problem affecting normal operationalisation of Community Technical Colleges.

Under normal circumstances, government recommends that every class (trade) should have a minimum of two teachers. That is to say, a class should have teachers who can handle both theory

and practical aspects. However, all CTCs studied in this research had majority of trades with one instructor who was handling up to 7 subjects in a single class.

On the same, the researcher was informed that College principals and deputy principals work as instructors apart from managing the college. That is to say, almost all Community Technical College principals and deputy principals are also fully responsible for planning and delivery of lessons in a class (trade). On the other hand, the principal acts as the head of college management. Meaning, he or she is responsible for all management affairs of the institution, including attending all management meetings required from time to time.

Due to low staffing levels of these colleges, college principals complained that they do struggle to perform management functions since trainees are always on their neck looking for them to go to class and teach. They also complained that their lessons are mostly interrupted due to inconveniences found in the scope of teaching while holding headship position at the school.

4.3.2 Sub-Theme 2. College management views on funding of CTCs

College principals acknowledged that Community Technical Colleges get ORT funding from the Government as well as from Technical and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA). The importance and need of finance for normal running of any institution cannot be overemphasised. Every institution requires funds in order to be able to pay bills and cover for other related costs. It

must be mentioned that in a normal economy, the needs are always more than available resources. However, extents do differ.

College principals indicated that Community Technical Colleges get their funding from the government as well as TEVET. The institutions also get funds from fees collected from students. There are also some trainees who were selected by organisations like World Vision and IOM. The organisations provide for trainees' school fees. Principals said that there are so many critical issues which are directly caused by funding related problems. They mentioned that community technical colleges are suffering because of inadequate and delayed funding.

1. Inadequate funding

All college principals and deputy principals who were interviewed during this study complained that they received insufficient funding from government to sustain their operations. The money they get from the government as well as TEVETA is not enough to cover bills which the colleges incur in their routine activities. In stressing this point, one principal pointed out that the college gets around Malawi Kwacha 400 000.00 monthly which is not enough to cover utility bills (water and electricity). One Community Technical College which was visited had no running water as Water Board disconnected water supply to the institution due to unpaid bills. At the time of the visit, the school had had four months without water. Both the principal and his deputy agreed that it will be very difficult for them to have water connected because the school is in deep financial crisis. They pointed out that even if the water is connected, it will be impossible to sustain the supply of the same due to bills which the school incurs. On this, the researcher noted that the school

gets Malawi Kwacha 100 000.00 per month. This is not even close to half of what the school needs to operate.

It must be mentioned that water means a lot to any institution and these colleges are non-exceptional. Teaching and learning can only take place at a normal environment not at a place where water is not available. The researcher brainstormed how difficult teaching and learning can be at a place where students and teachers cannot wash their hands, cannot use the toilet, cannot clean themselves after workshop and cannot access water. Water is a must and basic requirement some practical lessons like those in brick laying and plumbing.

2. Delayed funding

Despite funding not being enough, managers of these colleges complained that they get their funding very late. The study established that normally, the government delays to release ORT for the schools to use. It was also appreciated that TEVETA releases financial support in good time compared to government. However, TEVETA funding is quite little as it depends on the number of students enrolled at the school. Having many students means getting more funding and the opposite is true.

One college principal narrated that

Everything runs on money. For example, now we do not have water and we are complaining about the delay of ORT. Maybe when it comes we will sort out our 300 000 bill. However, even if the

water is connected again our usage is high and we cannot sustain the expenses with ORT which is not only less but delays.

such sentiments reveal of the aggravated situation in the Community Technical Colleges which are struggling financially and therefore cannot normally operate if funding is inadequate and delayed. Delayed funding delays plan implementation for the institution which also affects the delivery of service and competencies of the managers. In the end, as the managers stressed, they are blamed and considered incompetent for problems beyond their control. Water, electricity and security remain basic needs for every institution.

4.3.3 Sub-Theme 3: College principals' views on infrastructure challenges

College principals registered their disappointments regarding how old CTCs started and their current state in terms of infrastructure. To begin with, CTC management respondents narrated that there was huge political influence during the introduction of CTC. One respondent said that

The main problem is that by then politicians wanted to have community Colleges established and running in the communities in whatever way. As such the colleges were opened in existing old hospitals, agriculture offices and in Community Based Organisations (CBOs). It is only a few especially those newly constructed who have special land for the college. In doing so, a lot of

important issues were missed. For example, the government now does not pay any attention to see how these colleges are operating.

Another staff in college management said that

Most Community Colleges were constructed on the land which does not belong to them. For example, in Mponera, there are serious misunderstandings with SMED as SMED who have been demanding that the college be relocated away from its campus.

The respondent also added

Another example, when I was employed at this college, I was told to be working at Chitala Community College in Salima. Chitala research station is where this college was supposed to be. It was funded by European Union. However, when the government started this community college, things changed, they immediately changed the plan as you know, when you are in power, everything is possible.

Community Technical colleges which were established during the first phase have land ownership challenges, as well as poor infrastructure. The problem of poor infrastructure is mostly affecting community Colleges which came into existence during the starting period of Community Technical Colleges. These colleges have got very poor infrastructure with inadequate classrooms as well as administration rooms. These colleges are not fully owned by the college as they were

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transformed from their original purpose. As pointed out earlier on, these colleges emerged from old hospitals, agricultural offices, CBOs and many more.

On the same, as the transformed buildings were not designed for college purposes, they leave a lot to be desired. Respondents complained that these buildings are very substandard. They are also not friendly for female trainees at the college. Due to financial constraints, students are told to take care of the premises themselves. This means that they are responsible for cleaning the classes, workshops as well as toilets. On the same, respondents agreed that these infrastructures are not conducive for people with disabilities. This is so because the buildings were built a long time ago and also that CTCs are already disadvantaged financially to renovate the structures.

4.3.4 Sub-Theme 4: College teachers' views on work motivation

College teachers indicated that most staff are not motivated to do their work. The respondents said that they only come to teach at the college because it is the only way of earning a living at the moment. This is reflected in one respondent's statement who said that

Let me not lie, we come here on daily basis simply because that is what brings our daily bread on the table, but talking about work itself is another story. We are not motivated and our conditions are not good at all.

One teacher said that

I will give an example like fellow teacher in secondary school or primary at least most of them have houses where they stay or if they do not have, they get something to compensate but that is

not the case with us. We live in the community with no consideration at all like allowance to compensate us.

Furthermore, teachers complained about their salaries. According to them, their salaries are not enough to match with the current living conditions. They pointed that so many things are going up in the country but nothing is being done to cushion them against high inflation rates experienced by the country.

Instructors also pointed out that since the government does not conduct regular monitoring and supervision of these colleges, it is difficult for the government to appreciate those working hard than others. This is a demotivating factor as in normal setting those working hard and producing effective results need to be acknowledged and appreciated in any possible way be it financially or morally. However, there is no future that this can be happening as there are no programmes to monitor the staff to appraise how they are faring in terms of performance.

Government as the employer of those working for the Community Technical Colleges has the role to motivate its employees. One way in which an employee can be motivated is through the provision of upgrading opportunity for staff's qualification. The researcher was pleased to note that few teachers were given an opportunity to upgrade themselves with different state owned universities in the country. These instructors were given the opportunity with Malawi government through the ministry and the government has provided study leave and pays for the staff. In essence, this is the kind of motivation which excites not only those benefiting from the scheme at

the moment but also for those who are yet to benefit from it as they see sense of appreciation from the government.

4.3.5 Sub-Theme 5. College teachers' views on monitoring and supervision (by the ministry)

In relation to monitoring of CTCs by government, one teacher respondent was quoted saying,

You know the main problem which I observed is that the government does not pay interest to monitor the way we are operating and come up with strategies to address our challenges. What they are good at is coming after a term or two to shout at us when they see that something is wrong.

Teachers expressed that they have been expecting the government through the ministry to be conducting supervision programme for these CTCs. However, this is not the case as most colleges have not been visited by any official from the ministry in the past two or three terms. The expectations come in because these colleges have just been introduced such that there are so many things requiring attention of both the government and the community. However, the government is doing little in monitoring CTS.

Another respondent said that

Sometime we cruise three terms just teaching our own way as long as we are teaching. Now we say is it not possible like in formal education sector, we have a system where we are monitored by authorities just like it is done in formal education sector? Not like the way things are being done now. We operate with so much caution that we maybe spoiling the youths instead of empowering them.'

Teachers said that it is very difficult for the authorities to appreciate the challenges which are faced by the Community Technical Colleges. Basically, government does not monitor the situation of Community Technical Colleges to understand and appreciate the situations of our Community Technical colleges.

Respondents said that there has never been a programme by college management regarding the supervision of these colleges. On the same, Community Technical College management claimed that they do refer their challenges to college management. However, government only responds that they have noted the challenges and this is the basic answer that is given and no further action is taken when this feedback is provided.

4.3.6 Sub-Theme 6: College principals and teachers' views leadership challenges in CTCs

Both principals and teachers' respondents pointed out that there are leadership challenges among staff managing and teaching at CTCs. The research found that there are no differences in both qualification and employee grade for college principals and his/her subordinates. This is creating some problems in leadership between teachers and school principals.

Under normal circumstances, a college manager/principal is supposed to be above his/her subordinates in relation to grade and qualification. However, putting both the boss and junior on the same grade is a receipt for leadership wrangles at a work place. It is therefore not surprising

that they are leadership issues in the colleges. What is clearly known is that for possessing the same qualification and grade, college principals lack much confidence and self-esteem to rule and direct college instructors. The boss-junior relationship is always at threat in this circumstance. Obviously, the junior does not fully respect the boss knowing that nothing separates them. On the other hand, the one with a position feels that his/her position is at threat as it can be taken anytime and be given to the others since everyone is capable in relation to grade and qualification.

Both college managers and instructors revealed that through different means, they noticed that they (managers and instructors) are of the same grade and qualification. Those with positions expressed the concern that some of their teachers are disobedient to them because they think they are at the same level (academically). On the other hand, college teachers said that in so many circumstances, their ideas are not respected since they are taken as a threat to their bosses' positions considering they the equal footing.

In addressing this challenge, some teachers have resorted into going back to school to upgrade themselves. This is recommendable considering that management and the running of community colleges require well qualified human resource. Still, being a leader is something which has to be recognised and appreciated by the employer. It gives different interpretation when a leader is rewarded in the same way as the junior.

The researcher has it in mind that lacking strong leadership is likely going to affect college operations. It is not only college operations which can suffer, weak leadership is like going to

affect the results of the school. An institution cannot effectively implement its plans when players are pulling in different directions.

4.3.7 Sub-Theme 7: College principals and teachers' views on trainees' enrolment

Principals and teachers registered their dissatisfaction with the number of trainees enrolled in CTCs. According to them, Community Technical Colleges are failing to enroll the required number of trainees in most of their programmes. Basically, Community Technical Colleges give priority to youths from the district to enroll in different trades. However, the schools are struggling to enroll the desired number of students in almost all courses offered. One school principal stated that despite the efforts, the school has plenty of space in all classes.

For example, the recommended number of trainees in a class is from 25 as minimum and 30 as maximum. However, at the time of discussions and interviews, the school had only 8 students in bricklaying, 7 in carpentry and 5 in welding. This is a clear indication that schools are having problems with getting students enrolled in these programmes.

The researcher took further interest to understand what could be the major causes of under-enrolment. Respondents pointed out attitude/mentality issues and failing to reach to all potential individuals as the major issues contributing to CTC not enrolling above minimum required numbers of students. It was discussed that many people in the communities regard CTC as the last thing to do in life. They consider CTC education as education meant for the least intellectual capable people.

On the other hand, it was mentioned that CTCs might not be doing enough in advertising and reaching out to all potential individuals who might be in need of CTC-education. In recruitments of students, most CTCs advertises through community radio stations, posters, churches and all common places where people gather. With reference to current enrolment levels, most CTCs said that they plan to use other means of advertising which will reach many people like the newspapers. It must be pointed out that the research acknowledged that CTCs are now enrolling students from outside the district.

4.4 Theme 2; Challenges faced by trainees in the process of acquiring skills

4.4.1 Sub-Theme 1: Teachers and Trainees Views on teaching and learning resources

The study found that CTCs are in serious problems in as far as teaching and learning resources are concerned. Whenever the researcher mentioned about critical challenges affecting CTCs, lack of enough teaching and learning resources was mentioned by teachers, current as well as former trainees. Collected data indicates that Community Technical Colleges are basic teaching and learning resources in the following categories

   i.   Teaching resources for teachers

Teachers said that there are no teaching and learning resources for teachers. One instructor was quoted saying:

It is not easy to teach at a Community Technical College. There are no books provided to us (teachers) to use in teaching. We are only provided the course outline. Basically, a teacher need to purchase internet bundle, go on the internet and get information. I had a worst experience when

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I was posted to teach at a certain Community College. I was so excited for the new job. However, when I asked for materials to be using, I was told that everyone looks for his/her own materials to use, and that I will not be provided with anything. I thought that meant that I will be getting the materials from the library, but was disappointed further when I noticed that there was no library at the college.

Talking about teaching materials, it has been established that it is not easy to teach at a community Technical College in as far as teaching materials are concerned. As pointed earlier on, these colleges are understaffed and in most cases, one teacher has to handle up to six subjects in a single class. Teaching all these subjects using personal resources to prepare for subject content is a tough daily assignment for the teachers.

ii.   Library

In all the three colleges visited, the study found that there were no libraries. This was making life very difficult for both teachers and students. In the case of newly built CTCs, the study found that there are only rooms earmarked for library but there are no books or any materials in them. Most trainees mentioned that academic life is not easy for them considering that they only have class notes to use and prepare for exams. Very few students in these colleges have smart phones which they use to get different resources from the internet. However, these students also complained that it is not easy to source materials for their courses on the internet. Trainees mentioned carpentry & joinery, brick laying and welding as courses which require textbooks which cannot easily be found on the internet.

On the part of instructors, it was discussed that it is not easy to motivate students to have a reading culture. One was quoted saying

The timetable has allocated spaces for the library. These are special periods when the trainees are supposed to go in the library and study. Studying helps them to understand what they have been learning and prepare for exams. However, most community colleges do not have libraries. We always receive the question as to why do we have library on the timetable yet the school has none?

iii.   Workshops/workshop materials

Most respondents from old CTCs mentioned that they do not have proper workshops. Proper workshop in this case meant having basic materials in it and good space to accommodate a class.

One student said:

As trainees in the tailoring and design section, we struggle with resources. We only have one working machine, against a class of about 20 trainees. It is always difficult for us to learn and practice what we are learning. This problem occurs because when we are given an assignment that require us to sew and come up with something yet there are no resources to use.

The study appreciated that CTCs which are currently being built by the government are having good workshops with necessary materials in them. Respondents from one of the newly built CTCs appreciated that while it is difficult to have everything in a workshop, at least their workshop has

all the necessary equipment which allow them to grasp useful skills in their field. These newly constructed CTCs have far much better workshops as compared to those of old CTCs.

4.4.2 Sub-Theme 2: Teachers' views on induction of teachers

Teachers complained that they were not inducted into the teaching profession at the time they were joining CTCs as instructors. It must be pointed out that most instructors have minimum qualification set by the ministry to teach in the Community Colleges which is level 1 certificate from trade test. While appreciating that Community Technical Colleges have qualified teachers, most teachers expressed their concerns towards how they are transitioned from industry to go into classes and teach.

Almost all Community Technical College teachers were employed from their specific field where they were making use of the skills they have. That is to say, for example, a teacher for plumbing was employed to teach straight from projects where he/she was working as plumbing supervisor. The same for electrical, brick laying or carpentry instructors.

What is more worrying, was that these instructors were taken from their respective field straight to classes and teach. These other required trainings were happening when they had already started teaching. This is unlike with what happens in the education sector where one goes to a teaching College for years before he/she is employed as a teacher. Teachers are taught different elements necessary for the delivery of lessons like lesson plans, schemes, class management as well as

teaching methods. It is wise to assume that teachers who have gone to these teaching colleges will be effective. It is therefore very different with teachers who are employed from industry to effectively teach and manage classrooms. One instructor mentioned that class management requires some sort of Psychology. However, for them, they are gaining the required psychology while they are already at work.

Another respondent mentioned that they once proposed that there should be a special college to be teaching instructors on how they can deliver lessons. This was based on the fact that these instructors lack basic knowledge on how they can deliver lessons. It was mentioned that instructors can be capable people who are excellent in their field. However, lack of this training largely affects them and makes them look like incompetent people.

While having specific colleges to teach instructor may seem like a long term solution, it was suggested that universities can introduce specific courses to help Community Technical College teachers learn the basics and fundamentals of teaching.

This challenge was mentioned by respondents who are currently teaching in these colleges. However, it was noted that this challenge affects students in the long run. Communities expect instructors who are well baked to effectively impact skills in our youths. While these teachers might be good in their technical field, they lack most important philosophical foundations which will enable them to deliver in a classroom.

4.4.3 Sub-Theme 10 Teachers views on trainings and professional development for teachers

Regarding trainings and professional development, teachers said that this does happen but once in a while. School management expressed that it normally takes years before they are engaged in any training. However, expectations are high that there will be more of these trainings with reference to current developments taking place in the sector. They pointed out that there is a new born project called 'Zantchito" which is likely going to require instructors to go to some sort of training. This new project aims at equipping TVET teachers with practical ways on how they can teach technical subjects. The 'Zantchito' programme aims at creating an ecosystem of job creators, as opposed to job seekers. Through the British council, it will do this by addressing the Malawi economy's need for skilled professionals and providing decent jobs and self-employment opportunities for young TEVET graduates, University graduates, and entrepreneurs.

On the same, some subjects (fundamentals) require instructors to be updated in some technological aspects. For example, in Technical Drawing, there is AUTOCARD, a computer programme which aids those doing designing in so many ways. An instructor is expected to teach this programme through computers. Despite having computers, most CTCs have no instructor who knows how the AUTOCARD operates. It becomes very cumbersome when the teacher is not even conversant with computers. When this is the case, teachers are blamed by the public for being incompetent. For sure, this is always the case because the public is not aware of the root causes of these problems. This is equated as having bad tools while expecting best results from the project.

As if that is not enough, modern teaching requires so many technologies to be used in order to effectively deliver a lesson to students. For example, currently the use of projectors is in fashion. Teachers are expected to prepare power point presentations and use them when delivering lessons. However, this is a non-starter for a brick laying, carpentry, electrical or plumbing teacher who only has skills about his/her specific field.

4.4.4 Sub-Theme 3-Trainees views on career path for students

The research found that most trainees complain and worry about lack of career path. The current education system in CTCs is that once level 1-2 are completed, the trainees can proceed to NTC where they can do level 3 and 4. However, when this is complete, it is very difficult for them (students) to use their acquired qualification obtained at CTCs and National Technical College as entry qualification into public universities. Currently, public universities do not recognise the qualification obtained from Technical colleges as entry qualifications.

One respondent was quoted saying '

For some of us, we would love if what we are learning here should be able to qualify us for University education. It's not right for us to end here, we dream more than this. Still, we don't understand why trade test qualification is not recognised by Malawi universities as entry qualification.'

Data collected from the study shows that most trainees are psychologically affected by this fact. According to them, CTCs education should not only lead them to employment or self-employment, but should also be providing a clear chance to be enrolled into public universities for upgrading. Some respondents openly said that they do fail to aim for best grades since they see the qualification as limiting their capabilities.

One respondent said that

When you are at a primary school you dream of being selected to a good secondary school and when you are in secondary school you dream of going to a good university. But this is not the case here, it's not really clear the benefits of passing with good grades because at the end of the day the best one can achieve is being a college tutor

4.4.5 Sub-Theme 4-Trainees views on staffing numbers of teachers

The study also found that staffing numbers of teachers is largely affecting students in their acquisition of skills in the CTCs. The study established that there are few teachers compared to the number of subjects a teacher is required to teach. Trainee's respondents pointed out that they find it difficult to learn from one single teacher who is just changing subjects for the rest of the day.

One respondent said that,

As we all know, everyone has his/her shortfall. The same with teachers. So, some teachers have struggle to articulate and deliver content in some subjects. This affects our performance in all

subjects that the teacher handles for us for the rest of our stay at the college. In short, even food at home you need to change. So problem I observed is that we have very few teachers, so we are learning, but this is not how things were supposed to be like if we had a choice.

Adding to this one, another one added that,

In life, there are so many unforeseen circumstances that happen. One can fall sick, or something can happen that can make him/her miss classes. What follows is that there will not be classes until the teacher returns. If its three days, it means three days without classes. This only proves the serious deficit were experiencing.

As pointed out earlier, CTCs are understaffed and this is a big problem. This problem is affecting management, current teachers as well as trainees learning at these institutions in such a way that the quality of teaching and learning is being compromised. Students cannot be expected to concentrate on 7 subjects with the same teacher. In addition, we cannot expect teachers to prepare well for a class when that same teacher is expected to prepare for more than 6 courses.

4.4.6 Sub-Theme 5. Trainees views on boarding facilities challenges

The study found that boarding facilities were a big problem in CTCs. All the three CTCs visited have no boarding facilities. Trainees said that they find it very hard to balance community life and that of school. One respondent was quoted:

In general, being a student itself demands one to concentrate on academic life. However, life in the community also demands us to conduct different chores which could have not been there if we had boarding facilities at the school.

As a college, students feels that having boarding facilities could have solved most of the problems that they are facing. This problem was more emphasised by female trainees who complained about accommodation problems in the communities where these CTCs are found. According to them, most communities lack proper accommodation place (hostels) where they can comfortably stay. Most houses surrounding CTCS were said to be in very bad shape considering student life, especially for female trainees.

In addition, respondents pointed out that they sometimes knock off very late and walking a distance to their homes is sometimes risky. One respondent said

As we have already said, our college has only one machine which we use in tailoring and design. When we are given an assignment to do, we end up working until late in the evening for everyone to utilise the machine. This makes us go to our respective homes very late, something which puts us at risk in view of those with bad intentions, especially women.

4.5 Theme 3; Suggested ways in which CTCs can manage and address the critical issues

4.5.1 Sub-Theme 1. Principals and teachers' views on addressing funding challenges in CTCs

It is common knowledge that schools across the country and the global world are constantly facing financial difficulties and budget cuts is the order of the day. While this is the case, the cost of running schools keeps rising. As reported earlier on, funding is one of the major issues affecting the operationalisation of CTCs. Funding in CTC is not only less but also delays. The impact of having inadequate and delayed funding is huge. The researcher quizzed principals and teachers to brainstorm ways they think will assist in addressing funding problems. The researcher and respondents agreed that both college management and government have roles to play in making sure that the schools get the minimal financial resources required and that these resources are put to best use. Among others, the following came out

- Increasing enrolment of students. The study found that TEVET funding depends on the number of students available at the school. That is to say, the more the students, the more the funding the school gets. While the goal of education is not only about numbers but also quality, increasing students enrolled in these CTCs will mean more funding from stakeholders like TEVET. Enough funding for the institution guarantees normal operations at the school which can increase education quality in the long run.

- Strengthening and improving parallel programme. The study found that apart from TEVET and government, CTCs offers parallel programmes. Parallel programmes offer other trainees who have not been formally selected a chance to enroll and train with these

colleges. The fees for parallel programme is relatively high compared to normal intake which gets support from government and TEVETA. What is certain is that a bigger chunk of funds from this programme goes into the school's account to support the school. Respondents pointed out that CTCs have the potential to increase the number of students enrolled in parallel programme and what needs to be done is just to put up good strategies for this to materialise. The study suggest that CTCs needs to put in place committees specifically to look into ways of how parallel programme can be marketed and pull desired results.

- Promoting partnership with organisations. The study found that there are a number of partners who work with CTC in the promotion of skilled labour among youth. At the time of the study, International Organisation for Immigration (IOM) and World Vision were said to be some of the partners working with CTCs. These organisation, selects students and fund them to study different programmes at different CTCs. Respondents mentioned that there must be many potential partners who can do this and what needs to be done is to strategise on how CTCs can promote this kind of partnership. With partners, CTCs can solve problems to do with delayed funding from the government as funds from these partners can be used while waiting for that from the government. Partnership with organisations is likely going to bring a number of positive results apart from sorting funding problems. Partnership with organisations can buy public trust in these CTCs. This can further be used as a tool to increase trainees' enrolment in the colleges.

- Promoting income generating activities. Promotion of income generating activities is one of the best ways of making schools sustainable. Likewise, CTCs need to invest in the culture of promoting income generating activities. The researcher understands that CTC's have workshops which have potential of producing different goods. Utilisation of these workshops to produce different kinds of items is one way of generating income. For example, in Carpentry and Joinery, items like chairs, shelves and doors are produced while teaching trainees. Welders can produce door frames and window frames in the workshops during practical sessions. These items can be sold to the communities at fair prices thereby creating income for the school.

Apart from utilising workshops, schools can make use of school site to generate it's on income. In these communities, local organisations and businesses might need space for events such as classes, business meetings or training sessions or even hall spaces for parties and events. Making use of the school site at a fee can be a way of raising income for the school. While the income collected might look small, school can make use of these funds to pay for bills like water and electricity. Having many of these kind of activities is likely going to sustain management operations of the institution.

- Capacity building for college management. The study found that building capacity of college managers is one way of addressing financial problems experienced by CTCs. Almost all college managers for CTCs have industrial and teaching experience, and little in management. Such that, many of them are managing institutions for the first time in their career. It is clear that there is no problem being a manager for the first time, the only

problem is capacity of these managers in decision making. As explained, CTCs have the capacity to be generating even more income than what they need. However, this is not possible if managers lack managerial skills in spearheading income generating activities, partnerships promotion with organisations where proposals can be involved, skills in promoting parallel programmes etc. As the government and TEVET are doing their part, school managers need to look into ways in which they can raise their own income so that CTCs become more sustainable. To increase their capacity, school managers have a number of options from trainings to upgrading programmes.

4.5.2 Sub-Theme 2: principals and teachers' views on addressing shortage of teachers challenges in CTCs

This study has established that CTCs are facing shortage of teachers/instructors problem. All CTC under study expressed that they have few teachers. While the ministry recommends a minimum of two teachers per class, all CTCs visited had one instructor in every class. This problem is affecting trainees, teachers themselves as well as college managers. The study appreciates that it is not easy to address this problem as the problem demands long term strategies. However, principal and teachers suggested short term ways in which CTCs can address this problem.

- Employing part-time teachers who can be paid from income generating activities. It is clear that with the financial problems facing CTCs, it's very difficult to expect the same college to be employing parallel staff. However, as described below, solving financial constraints will be a stepping stone to solve most of the problems that CTCs are facing.

Respondents agreed that CTCs can only be able to employ extra teachers if they strengthen their financial muscle.

One teacher said 'to say the truth, we overwork at this place and we do not have time to rest, but we cannot dream of employing part time teachers looking at the problems that we already have. We are failing to settle even water bills, what more a part time teacher? However, this is possible if we can sort out existing financial problems.'

As it has been established, partnering with organisations, increasing enrolment of students, revamping income generating activities and increasing capacity of college managers are some of the suggested ways of addressing financial challenges faced by CTCs. If this is done, CTCs are going to be sustainable. Having adequate teachers is vital for any school which dreams of achieving its goals. For example, enough teachers are likely going to uplift the face of every institution and improve community trust.

- Opening up for attachment places for University students. Participants and respondents to this study explored the option of inviting students studying in universities to be conducting attachments in CTCs. Most students studying education and related programmes go to secondary schools to do attachments which mostly last for the whole term. While gaining experience, attachment programme also supports teachers in reducing workload for them. In the same scope, it has been suggested that CTCs should open up and invite students to be doing attachments in these schools. Respondents and the researcher agreed that students

studying in public universities lack technical knowledge in most of the courses covered in CTCs. One respondent was quoted

What I see as a gap is where, for example those doing Technical Education at MUBAS cannot have practical knowledge and skills in carpentry, brick laying, welding or tailoring

This observation was agreed by most respondents in a number of focus group discussions. While this is the case, several respondents agreed to the suggestion that there are many subjects which third year or fourth year students from universities can handle. Students in these years can handle most fundamental and occupational subjects like Technical Drawing, Science (trade related), Mathematics, Communication and entrepreneurship.

Having students on attachments teaching these subjects can assist not only teachers by reducing their work, but also assist trainees by giving them a variety of teachers and thereby improving their skills acquisition. The study challenges CTCs management to consider taking on board those willing to corroborate with institutions of higher learning by giving them a chance to be sending their students in CTCs for attachments.

4.5.3 Sub-Theme 3: Teachers and trainees' views on addressing enrolment of trainees challenges

As described, the study found that enrolment numbers are very low in all CTCs that were visited. This is negatively affecting government's goal of introducing CTCs. It is not only government that is being affected as this is affecting the CTCs themselves. The researcher had discussions with

school management, instructors, trainees and former trainees on how this problem can be addressed. Shared below are some of the suggested ways;

- Giving CTCs strong community presence through marketing. While most communities are aware about the physical presence of CTCs, management of these CTCs have a bigger role of making sure that these schools are well marketed out there. The study found that the schools have strategies that they use to notify communities whenever they would like to register students at the beginning of every year. However, school instructors and management agreed that the current tools used to reach out to communities are not that effective. According to respondents, communities are usually notified using local means like community radio, posters (usually posted on the trees and notice boards).

- Community sensitisation on CTCs. The study also found that community sensitisation can be used as a tool of increasing enrolment numbers in our CTCs. Respondents to the study pointed out that communities show some lack of knowledge regarding the goals of CTCs in their communities. One respondent was quoted:

The problem is that most communities regard Technical Education as the last option, there is lack of interest and passion among the youth to pursue programmes offered in CTC. There are so many youths in the communities who have nothing to do but they don't want to come and learn skills which can bring positive change in their lives

Communities need to be sensitised on the benefits of having CTCs in their area. They also need to be sensitised on their perception about education offered by these schools. Communities need to appreciate the goal that the government want to achieve through creation of these CTCs.

- Partnership with organisations. As it has been alluded to, trends are showing that organisations have potential to bring more students into these CTCs. While appreciating this development, CTCs Management needs to strategise further on how they can strengthen this bond. The bond is of mutual benefit such that having it for longer time should be the goal. On the same, CTCs management need to build their own capacity and strategize on how to attract and partner with new organisations.

It is known that communities have so many people who need Technical Education. Most of the people in these communities are poor such that they cannot pay even the subsidised fees in our CTCS. On the other hand, organisations have the capacity to source financial resources and finance these students to go and train with CTCs. Knowing that they will be trained with financial support from organisations, many youths will find it easy to go and access education from these CTCs. With that arrangement, CTCs will benefit much since they are going to have students already enrolled by organisations. As if that is not enough, this is also going to solve problems to do with delayed funding as most organisations have efficient systems compared to government setting where delayed funding is the order of the day.

4.5.4 Sub-Theme 4: Teachers and trainees' views on addressing teaching and learning resources problem

Teaching and learning resources is one of the major critical issues affecting operationalisation of CTCs. As pointed out earlier on, the study found that most CTCs have no proper workshops, library, no teaching resources for instructors and learning resources for trainees. It is widely known that the government has more responsibility to provide for these resources. However, CTCs can also put in place measures to address this problem as the problem is largely affecting them. Interviews and discussion with respondents suggested that the following can help in addressing this problem

- Utilising available resources. It is commonly known that it is not easy to purchase textbooks for schools and CTCs, are non –exceptional. High purchasing cost and scarcity of teaching and learning materials in the Technical fields are two major reasons which likely limit CTCs in having the necessary materials. It has been observed that most newly introduced CTCs have computer laboratories. However, only students doing ICT and related courses are the ones who benefit from these computer laboratories.

  With reference to collected data, CTCs can explore the option of utilising soft copy textbooks for both trainees and instructors. CTCs can make use of available computers by downloading and storing soft copy books, articles, journals and any helpful publications in these computers. These can help students as well as teachers to still have access to books. Compared to hard copies (books), soft copy information can easily be shared to so many computers making information easily accessible to many trainees. On the same,

trainees with access to smart phones need to be encouraged to make good use of their gadgets by being resourceful by sourcing, storing, sharing and studying using these gadgets.

- Making improvement in the use of funding meant for books. The researcher understands that CTCs gets funding package meant for books and other teaching and learning materials. The study appreciates TEVET for being there for CTCs in the provision of these resources to support Technical education demands. The study took some interest to discuss with respondents on how funding for books can be utilised. It was agreed that there is room for improvement on how these resources can be utilised. Respondents pointed out the need for management to always be checking and balance up priorities when purchasing resources. One respondent was quoted 'I will give examples, sometimes you find that we have funding and we have to buy our needs using those resources. Management need to be balancing short term and long term resources. In most cases we purchase a lot of short term resources because they are quite cheap and we end up forgetting long term resources which are expensive, but offer long-term benefits.'

Respondents also suggested to prioritise other type of resources other than books. For example, it was discussed that management can come up with pamphlets which can be locally printed and placed in the libraries. With this way, both teachers and students will have the required teaching and learning resources.

- Purchasing printers for CTCs. It was suggested that having equipment like the printer can sustain and solve a number of problems which CTCs face. Most trainees' complained about the standard of examination administration in CTCs, whereby examination are administered using the chalkboard. Having the printer in this case is likely to support so many challenges which schools are facing. Useful information can easily be printed, photocopied and shared to students and examination administration can easily be done if this equipment is available. While printers are relatively expensive, this remains the study's suggestion as this is going to solve so many challenges while minimising school expenses at the same time.

4.6 Chapter summary and conclusion

As reported above, the study's findings show that Community Technical Colleges are facing several challenges which are affecting both, management and student's acquisition of skills. Issues affecting management include staffing levels, funding, infrastructure and work motivation. On the other hand, issues affecting trainee's acquisition of skills include lack of adequate teaching and learning resources, career path for students, lack of boarding facilities and low staffing numbers of teachers.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings out a summary of the findings and interpretation of the findings in relation to the objectives of the study. It also discusses the findings of the study with reference to other previous studies related to the area under study. The chapter has been subdivided into three areas of critical challenges faced by CTCs, challenges faced by trainees in skills acquisition as well as the suggested ways in addressing these issues.

5.2 Critical issues affecting operationalization of CTCs.

As it has been established, there are so many critical issues which are affecting the operationalisation of CTCs. In brief, these challenges range from understaffing, funding problems, infrastructure, work motivation for staff, lack of monitoring and supervision by the government, leadership wrangles between staff and management and low enrolment levels of students.

On staffing levels of CTCs, it is difficult to assume that CTCs can operate normally as the numbers of staff are very low. To begin with, low staffing levels leaves school principals with no option but to also act as full time teachers. However, principals do act as the controllers of everything in the management of the school including acting as focal persons for the ministry of labour. For the smooth running of the College, the principals work hand in hand with the committees' established to look after the school including District Management Committees (Member) and school management committee (secretary). The positions (Member for District Management Committee

and secretary for School management committee) are automatic positions which comes by virtue of being a school principal.

In addition, a Community Technical College deserves to have supporting staff who assist in the normal operations of an institution. Accountants, Secretaries and librarians are some of the positions expected to be available at a school. However, principals indicated that there are not more than two individuals (positions) supporting CTCs in normal operations of the school. In most schools, only the bursar and secretary were available.

The presence of only bursar at most CTCs is a clear sign that a lot of professional related works are done by instructors at the school. They therefore, work hand in hand with the bursar to make sure that all administration related works are properly done for the smooth running of the school. However, this is very difficult for instructors who have to find time from their busy schedule and support administrative functions at the school.

On infrastructures, the researcher agrees that it is very difficult for teaching and learning to actively take place using these old structures used by Community Technical Colleges. However, it is pleasing to note that the government is taking positive direction in modernising CTCs which are being built now. The researcher appreciated that CTCs constructed lately and those currently under construction are of very good standard. These colleges have beautiful designs with enough teaching and learning spaces. There are high hopes that these structures will support teaching and learning designed to take place in these colleges.

On school monitoring and supervision, the researcher agrees with respondents that any new born project is like a baby which grows while relying on monitoring and supervision by the parent. This was supposed to be the case for CTCs which are operating in a pool of critical issues affecting their normal business. We cannot expect CTCs to produce candidates with employable skills or entrepreneurs with the current conditions faced by these institutions. What is undisputable is the fact that CTCs can only do better if enough support is given to them. While the support can come from different stakeholders, it is obvious that government needs to do more than the rest in rendering its support.

One major support is monitoring of these colleges. Monitoring of CTCs will help both the government and community to understand burning issues which are affecting the normal business of our Community Technical Colleges. It is only through understanding of these problems that will give birth to possible solutions. These solutions can come from meetings and discussions between college managers, community and the government. However, as it stands, it is very difficult to understand issues affecting CTCs as well as coming up with strategies on how to address them.

As described in the research findings, CTCs are facing so many challenges that are hugely affecting normal operationalisation of these Colleges. In the scope of understanding why the Colleges are facing these problems, one needs to the vision and objectives in the establishment of CTCs in Malawi. With reference to gathered information, there was huge political influence in the establishment of the colleges. Respondents and the general public are aware that the establishment of CTCs were in the manifesto of the then government. As this was manifested, they had to get

this done. The fact that these challenges have been researched and reported in this study, might easily attempt one to attribute change of government as one huge contributing factor to all these challenges which are faced by the colleges.

However, it is difficult to look into that direction as the establishment of the colleges with the then government is disputable. It is true that change in the political environment might indeed have an impact on the life of CTCs. Still, there are many challenges which have been there from the establishment of CTCs such that political change which the country experienced has had nothing to do with them. As it has been pointed out, CTCs were established in a haste such that some other important areas were missed.

One critical issue affecting CTCs is lack of enough financial resources during and after the establishment of the Colleges. In a normal setting, government was expected to invest enough resources when these schools were being established. However, by starting and opening schools in old buildings which were serving other purposes or were idle, speaks for itself that resources were not enough. Establishing Colleges with no teaching and learning materials, including the library, is another indicator that these schools were established with little resources.

In addition, one can easily question the spirit of progressing opening these schools without important tools like library. The importance of presence of teaching and learning materials means a lot to any normal education institution. It must be remembered that a number of CTCs were established in the first phase. One can still wonder the importance of opening so many schools

without proper infrastructure and teaching & learning materials. The researcher understands that it would have made sense if only few CTCs were established but with proper infrastructure and equipped with necessary teaching and learning resources.

From this understanding, one can get attempted to conclude that the government was just interested with opening so many CTCs. That is to say, the number of schools opened mattered most regardless of their conditions. For sure, this philosophy has and is what is affecting the schools up to date. For example, since political influence was huge by then, some schools are still in trouble with their hosts. In other schools, hosts are demanding that the school should move out of their campus and establish themselves somewhere else.

For the success of any project, one needs to make sure that there is a monitoring and supervision system in place. This is important because it is going to assist in tracking the progress of the project and make any correction to the project if need be. The element of monitoring and supervision has been missing in the operations of CTCs. Being new in Malawi, the government is supposed to monitor CTCs on how they are operating. The government through the ministry is also expected to be working hand in hand with CTCs managers in understanding their challenges.

Most of the challenges reported in this study can be solved if the ministry, community and college managers hold hands. However, the good stepping stone to make all this possible is by conducting monitoring and supervision for the schools. Monitoring will assist the College management as the challenges will not only be reported, but also seeing by those who can make strides in addressing

them. As usual, some issues cannot be seriously regarded if they are just reported. In addition, some challenges can be sorted out by just sharing ideas. Monitoring and supervision meetings in schools make it possible for stakeholders to share ideas on how burning issues can be addressed.

The study has also established that the government through the ministry, has not set much needed bureaucracy of CTCs in the country. Having leaders and juniors on the same grade or qualification, is an indicator that there are complications in administrative procedures. One obvious way of dealing with this problem is for government to separate college management from instructors, and bring in the concept of separation of powers. Through this, college management will be able to exercise its powers with less hustles. While this requires time considering government systems, the study challenges those holding management positions in CTCs to embrace and position themselves (through trainings and upgrading), as leaders of the institution. It must be appreciated that at the time of the study, few staff and managers were reported to be at universities, upgrading themselves. Trainings and upgrading programmes will not only increase capacity of CTCs' managers, but will also help government when aligning and separating powers between management and academic staff in CTCs.

Funding challenges experienced by CTCs are some of the most common challenges experienced by government funded institutions. In most cases, institutions funded by the government are under-funded and delayed funding is the order of the day. Many studies testify to that. Management of government funded institutions need to accept and have this in mind. This is vital for CTCs too.

As fighting for efficiencies in government systems require, CTCs managers need to consider ways of how they can sustain their institutions without government resources.

The study has suggested ways in which these institutions can sustain themselves. It must be acknowledged that these ways are not the only ones. College managers should also be challenged to explore and identify ways which can work for them, but sustaining schools without looking at government funding must be the goal.

One area which the study established to be negatively affecting CTCs is motivation. As usual, lack of motivation at workplace has some serious negative effects on employees, including disengagement and decrease in commitment. Most studies have established how difficult it is to deal with motivation. Still, there are a number of ways which CTCs can use to address this issue.

It must be understood that it is not easy to expect pay rise, good housing and many more benefits from the government to motivate employees. Still, there are so many ways which the ministry and college management can do in order to raise staff motivation at the work place. For instance, the ministry and CTC management can help employees understand their own motivations. They can also show care about people as studies have shown that high levels of emotional intelligence drive engagement and motivation.

5.3 Challenges faced by trainees in skills acquisition

The study findings show that lack of professional development for teachers is one of the main problems faced by teachers teaching in CTCs, and this is something which affects students in the long run. In his article on challenges facing TVET in Nigeria, Inyiagu (2014) recognised that human resource development, through well planned education and training initiatives, can contribute significantly to promoting the interests of individuals, enterprises, economy and society within the nation. As pointed out in Inyiagu's (2014) study, trainings and development for teachers is vital in order to produce fully baked students who are ready to be employed and later on, employ others. However, what has been reviewed in this study shows that the concept of professional development is not acknowledged and appreciated by the government and other stakeholders. As any other staff, CTCs staff deserve training and development on leadership and management concepts. This can equip them with skills and knowledge on how they can lead and manage their schools.

As reported in the findings chapter, teaching and learning resources are one of the major issues affecting trainees' acquisition of skills in CTCs. The study has established that CTCs lack enough teaching materials for teachers as well as learning resources for students. This challenge is related to what Woyo (2013) found in Zimbabwe, as she looked into challenges facing TVET institutions in producing competent graduates in the country. According to the study findings, lack of training materials for various workshops, obsolete training equipment and inadequate learning facilities, was affecting students negatively in acquiring the much needed skills at various Technical Colleges. He raised concern and challenged policy makers to ensure that TEVET systems are relevant and accessible while addressing issues of quality. This is based on the notion that Policy

makers across Africa are aware of the critical role that TEVET plays in the national development outcomes. The researcher agrees with what was reported in this study especially where it points that TEVET systems have to ensure that graduates are well equipped with the requisite practical skills for the job market.

In a similar study, Dasmani (2011) explored challenges confronting Technical Institute graduates in practical skills acquisition in the upper region of Ghana. The study revealed that lack of resources has led to cuts in the volume of training which was expected to be provided in technical institutes. These cuts were said to be a hindrance to the pursuit of critical objectives of providing training and subsequent job placement of technical institute graduates. This study cannot agree enough that lack of resources is massively affecting students in their pursuit of acquiring skills in their relevant fields.

It must also be pointed out that to some extent, CTCs are not making full use of Teaching materials which they have. As reported, CTCs are understaffed such that the majority of classes have one instructor who handles more than six subjects. Due to high pressure experience by CTC teachers, trainees reported that they see some materials not being utilised at the school. For example, some CTCs have computer labs where useful computer application systems like AUTOCARD can be learnt. However, proper training for such applications and shortage of teachers makes it difficult for trainees to learn using these computers.

This is in line with what Asukwo (2018) found in Nigeria when she studied utilization of instructional facilities in electronics workshop practice and maintenance for students' acquisition of trade skills in Technical Colleges in Akwa Ibom state in Nigeria. The study found that only a few equipment and tools were often utilised in electronics workshop practice and maintenance for students' acquisition of trade skills in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. According to study findings, both male and female NTCIII students shared similar views on the extent of utilisation of equipment, tools and consumables in electronics workshop practice and maintenance for students' acquisition of trade skills in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. It was concluded that only proper utilisation of instructional facilities would guarantee effective skills training, thus producing technical college graduates who can secure employment, become self-employed and be able to employ others, or pursue further education in tertiary institutions.

In addition, the study recommended that Heads of Trades should carryout regular supervision during practical hours to ensure the effective utilisation of instructional facilities for teaching in electronics workshop practice and maintenance in technical colleges. It was mentioned that Supervision of practical sessions is important for teachers to ascertain that much needed skills are being acquired by trainees. The need for supervision has also been mentioned in this study. The researcher agrees that monitoring and supervision is necessary for addressing some challenges discussed in this study.

5.4 On suggested ways of addressing challenges faced by CTCs

The researcher and study respondents do agree that challenges affecting the operationalisation of CTCs can be addressed. College management, government and all other stakeholders have the potential to make positive change and bring out the best out of CTCs. Firstly, these challenges need to be accepted by all stakeholders in order to create a positive environment for all. This is in line with Henri Fayol's coordination as a management function. Fayol (1916, 1930) recommends that all bodies and personnel involved should understand their responsibilities, resources and activities across the organisation work in harmony in order to achieve the desired goal. Stakeholders need to appreciate that challenges exist and are inevitable in any system and managers are there to solve these problems. It must also be acknowledged that it is everyone's responsibility to assist in doing whatever needs to be done in order to achieve imparting quality skills to trainees

As witnessed in the findings, the study has come up with suggested ways of addressing major challenges faced by CTCs. In summary, the researcher is of the view that CTCs can increase enrolment numbers of students, strengthen parallel programme, promote partnerships with organisations and promote income generating activities in order to address shortage and delay of funding problems. CTCs can also employ part-time teachers and accommodate attachments from university students in order to address staffing problems. It has also been suggested that CTCs can market itself to communities, sensitise communities and promote partnerships with organisations in order to address trainees' enrolment problems.

Most studies in Community Technical College Education have recommended government (through the ministry) intervention in addressing various problems. The researcher agrees that government intervention is key and very important. Government needs to step forward and hold hands with CTCs management and committees. These stakeholders need to come together to analyse situations and came up with strategies on how critical issues can be addressed. The concept of monitoring and supervision is also very important. This is because CTC is a still new concept in the country. As such, authorities need to be monitoring this programme. This will help in understanding and analysing critical issues affecting CTCs in the country. It is through these monitoring and supervision programmes which will create positive environment for government, communities as well CTCs management.

5.5 Chapter Summary & Conclusion

In summary, this chapter centered on discussion and interpretation of the study's findings. Study findings have also been compared to similar studies on the area under discussion. As discussed, so many challenges are hindering management and the goal of Community Technical College which is transferring of skills to trainees. The researcher agrees that both the ministry as well as college managers of CTCs have key roles to play in uplifting these colleges. As it has been reported, CTCs managers needs to look into strategies of sustaining themselves. The ministry in this case is there to set good standards and create a smooth environment for CTCs to flourish. However, it is in the hands of CTCs management to challenge themselves and strategise the ways of addressing most of these challenges. Challenges to do with teaching and learning resources, enrolment numbers of students can be addressed through strong leadership and management principles.

CHAPTER SIX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess the situation of Community Technical Colleges through analysis of critical issues and their practical implications in the operationalisation of these Colleges in Malawi. This chapter therefore presents the conclusion, contributions, and limitations of the study, recommendations and suggested areas for further studies.

6.2 Conclusion

This study was conducted to address three research questions. The first question which has been answered by this study was what are the critical issues affecting College management in the operationalisation of Community Technical College? The results of this study have shown that there are so many critical issues which are affecting the normal operationalisation of CTCs. It has been established that CTCs are understaffed on both, general staff and teachers. This is giving a lot of pressure to teachers. It has also been noted that College Principals also act as teachers due to this challenge.

The study has also established that funding is another challenge which is affecting the normal operations of CTCs. It has been noted that CTCs get funding from government, TEVETA, Parallel programme and other organisations supporting trainees learning in these CTCs. However, funding from the government which is the major source of funds for operations is not only less but also delayed. This is making life very difficult for CTC managers.

Lack of motivation is another critical issue which is affecting teachers as well as management. The study has also established that government has not been doing enough in monitoring and supervising CTCs. This is making it difficult for CTC managers to address their issues as reported, problems are not appreciated by the authorities.

In addition, the study has found that there are leadership and management challenges in CTCs. Fayol specified five primary functions or elements in management which are planning, organizing, commanding, coordination and control. These elements have high potential of making positive contribution in the management of CTCs. For example, the researcher observed that the element of commanding is compromised. It was noted that CTCs have principals and teachers who are put on the same government salary scale. It has also been reported that in most cases teachers and management have the same qualification. This is resulting in insubordination by teachers and loss of command by management. Lastly, the study has found that there are few trainees enrolled in CTCs compared to the recommended class size. This is affecting the goal of CTCs in reaching out to Malawian youths and equipping them with employable skills. This problem is also affecting CTCs on income which schools use to cover for operations.

The second research question addressed by this study was 'what are the challenges faced by trainees in the process of acquiring practical skills in CTCs?' In addressing this question, the study has found that lack of teaching and learning resources negatively affects trainees in the pursuit of acquiring skills in their respective field. On the same, the study has found that there are challenges in the areas of teaching and learning resources for teachers, library and workshop materials.

It has also been found that teachers are not inducted properly into the teaching posts in CTCs. This is leaving gaps among teachers, more especially, on teaching fundamentals. The study has also found that teachers in CTCs lack trainings and professional development programmes something which is vital for all professionals. Trainees also reported to the study that they do fear for their career path as they are not accommodated in universities after finishing their programmes with Technical Colleges.

Based on the findings, staffing numbers of teachers is also affecting trainees' acquisition of skills. The findings have also shown that lack boarding facilities challenge trainees. This challenge largely affects females who are staying outside school premises.

Addressing how Community Technical Colleges can cop up with these critical issues was the last research question, which has been addressed by the study. The study has made suggestions on how CTCs can address funding and staffing challenges. It has also made a number of suggestions on how enrolment, teaching and learning resource challenges can be addressed.

6.3 Contributions of the study

- This study has revealed critical issues which are affecting the normal operationalisation of CTCs. There has never been any study aiming at assessing this area since the concept of Community Technical Colleges was introduced in the country. The study has therefore provided literature as well as key gaps and areas which need to be addressed.

- The study has established critical issues which are affecting trainees in CTCs. Equipping trainees with employable skills is the primary goal of CTCs and this can be achieved by removing all obstacles hindering trainees in order for quality teaching and learning to thrive. The study has therefore, provided key areas which are challenging trainees in CTCs and this is a guide for the MoL and other stakeholders.

- The study has not only identified critical issues affecting management and trainees, it has also made suggestions on how CTCs can address and cope with these critical issues. The study has therefore, provided suggestions to CTCs management and MoL that can be used for the effective management of CTCs in a bid to improve management as well as the quality of teaching and learning in CTCs in Malawi.

6.4 Limitations of the study.

This study was not free from limitations. The first limitation was the use of purposive sampling technique. Despite this sampling technique having numerous advantages for a qualitative research like this one, still the technique is not perfect. The technique is highly prone to researcher bias no matter what type of method is used to collect data. The idea that a sample is created in the first place relies on the judgment of the researcher, as well as their personal interpretation of the data.

Cleff (2014) states that when the judgments are either poorly considered or ill-conceived, then this problem becomes a significant disadvantage that can provide roadblocks in the way of a final result. When there is elicitation, accepted criteria, or a theoretical framework in place, then this issue is minimized. Cleff (2014) agrees that it is difficult to see how this bias can be avoided completely, but awareness of this problem has helped the researcher on how the bias can be avoided. For example, the researcher avoided asking leading questions as these might suggest the responses desired by the researcher and not the respondent.

The research assessed critical issues affecting CTCs in their operationalisation in three Community Technical Colleges. These institutions are found in the central region of Malawi. Therefore, the views may not represent the general situations of Community Technical Colleges in the country.

Thirdly, the study did not involve the MoL whose contributions could have provided a deeper understanding of the general issues affecting the operationalization of CTCs in the Country. On the same, the study did not involve communities who might have provided their perceptions towards CTCs. While this is the case, the researcher has made use of managers, teachers, trainees and former trainees who have first-hand views and experiences on CTCs situations.

6.5 Recommendations

With reference to study findings, the following have been recommended:

- The study has found that there are many critical issues which are affecting the normal operationalisation of CTCs in Malawi. The study recommends corrective effort from college managers, ministry as well as CTC management committees in addressing these challenges. The researcher is convinced that the challenges found in the scope of operationalisation of CTCs are solvable and can be dealt with if the said stakeholders corroborate for the betterment of CTCs in the country. One way of achieving this is through introductions of monitoring and supervision programmes for CTCs by the Ministry of labour.

- The study has established that CTCs have the potential of sustaining themselves if what has been suggested in this study is considered. CTC management (principle and deputy principles) should explore other ways of raising income for the schools in order to reduce dependency on government funding. Income generating activities, parallel programmes and collaboration with donors are some of the ways suggested in the study that would assist CTCs in sustaining themselves.

- The study has found that infrastructure is a major issue affecting CTCs which were opened during the early phase of introducing CTCs in the country. The researchers understand that almost most of these CTCs were opened by transitioning old buildings. Majority of these buildings are in a very poor state and are not conducive for teaching and learning. The study recommends the ministry of labour to look into the ways of assisting these CTCs. The researcher also acknowledges that constructing new CTCs requires a lot. Still, renovation and addition of few blocks can assist.

- The study recommends the ministry of labour to restructure CTCs positions by differentiating management and teachers. As established, putting management and juniors under the same qualification and salary grade umbrella is not only creating management challenges, but also affecting motivation. The study therefore recommends a revision on this by the ministry as this will assist in the true definition of separation of powers.

- The study also recommends CTCs management, ministry as well as communities, to assess and identify the ways that can assists CTCs in increasing enrolment numbers of trainees. The study suggests ways which can assist in addressing this challenge. Still, management needs to sit down with communities and the ministry to explore ways which may assist in addressing the enrolment challenges in CTCs. As established, low enrolment numbers is affecting the goal of having Technical Colleges in the communities. Also, this is indirectly affecting institutional income thereby affecting operationalisation of CTCs.

- Lastly, the study recommends that the ministry of labour together with college managers (principles and deputies) should develop strategies and programmes of inducting newly recruited teachers into the teaching profession. As reported, teachers recruited to teach in CTCs are not inducted and this is leaving gaps in teaching methodologies as required by all teachers in the teaching profession. On the same, teachers should be given enough opportunities for training and professional development. Teachers like any other employee, should be given chances to train and develop in all the necessary areas where they are having gaps.

6.6 Areas for further study.

- Investigating communities' perceptions towards education/trainings offered by Community Technical Colleges in Malawi.

- Exploring government and management views and plans towards quality improvement of Community Technical Colleges in the Country.

- A comparative study of critical issues affecting normal operationalisation of Community Technical Colleges between old (2013-2018) and new Community Technical Colleges (2019-date).

- A comparative study of infrastructure issues affecting CTCs between old (2013-2018) and new Community Technical Colleges (2019-date).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Introduction letter

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MZUZU UNIVERSITY

**Department of Teaching, Learning and
Curriculum Studies**

1ST APRIL 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR EMMANUEL MALAMBO

Mr Emmanuel Malambo is a registered Master of Education (Leadership and
Management) Program student at Mzuzu University. He has been cleared by the
Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the
research study he is conducting as a requirement for the program.

Kindly assist him accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Margaret M. Mdolo
Program Coordinator

Appendix 2. Research ethics and regulatory approval and permit

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
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TEL: 01 320 722
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MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/40   **1st April, 2022**

Emmanuel Malambo,

Mzuzu   University,

P/Bag   201,

Mzuzu.

Email:

malamboyana@gmail.com

Dear Emmanuel,

RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/40: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN MALAWI; CRITICAL ISSUES AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AFFECTING THEIR OPERATIONALIZATION

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

finalized, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly

Committee Address:

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

maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,

Gift Mbwele

MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR

For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC

Appendix 3. Consent Form

Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)

Informed Consent Form for Research in
Situation Analysis of Community Technical College in Malawi: Critical issues and practical implications affecting their operationalization

Introduction

I am **Emmanuel Malambo** from **Mzuzu**. I am are doing research on **Situational analysis of community technical colleges in Malawi: Critical issues and practical implications affecting their operationalization.** 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 of another researcher.

Purpose of the research. This research aims to **access situation of community colleges through analysis of critical issues and their practical implications in the operationalization of these Colleges in Malawi**

Type of Research Intervention
This research will involve your participation in a group discussion and/or individual interview.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because the researcher believes that you can provide useful information 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 not more than 3 hours

Risks
You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview/survey 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, we 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: Mr. **Emmanuel Malambo, Mzuzu**. 0888 696 075, 0991 485 479, malamboyana@gmail.com

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 about 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 **Situation Analysis of Community Technical College in Malawi: Critical issues and practical implications affecting their operationalization**

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**

If illiterate 1

---

[1] A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness_____   **Thumb print of participant**

Signature of witness   _____ 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/year

Appendix 4. Interview guide for CTC Management

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY TECHNICAL COLLEGE MANAGEMENT

IN RESEARCH OF

Situation Analysis of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi: Critical issues and practical implications affecting their operationalization

Interview Guide for Community Technical College management team

1. What is your position at the college?

   _____

   I. When did you join the Community Technical College?

      _____

   II. How can you describe your position in terms of your routine works?

      _____

2. What challenges are found in the scope of managing Community Technical Colleges?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. How is the current situation of Community Technical college in terms of the following:
   3.1 Quality and quantity of teachers (or supporting staff)?
      _____
      _____

   3.2 Teaching and learning resources?

      _____
      _____

   3.3 Funding?

      _____
      _____

   3.4 Student academic performance?

_____

_____

3.5 Communications?

_____

_____

3.6 Trainings and professional development of staff?

4. What challenges do you think are most common in CTCs?

_____

_____

5. What do you think are the root causes of most of these challenges?

_____

_____

6. Do you think these challenges can be solved?

6.1 If   yes   how?

_____

_____

6.2 If not why?

_____

_____

6.3 How long do you think can take to solve most of these problems?

_____

_____

7. Do you think problems mentioned in 6 have serious impact on college management?

_____

_____

7.2. If yes, why and how do you think these challenges are critical?

_____

_____

7.3. Provide a general overview situation of Community Technical College in as far as challenges and critical issues are concerned.

Appendix 5. Focus group discussions guide for CTC members of staff

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION'S GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY TECHNICAL COLLEGE MEMBERS OF STAFF

IN RESEARCH OF

Situation Analysis of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi: Critical issues and practical implications affecting their operationalisation

Focus group discussion areas with Academic staff

1. Introductions
   _____
   _____

2. What courses are offered at the institution and reasons for everyone's choice of a course?
   _____
   _____

3. What type of resources are required for these courses?
   _____

4. Do you think the school has enough resources for the courses offered at the institution?
   _____

5. If not, what resources are lacking at the institution?
   _____

6. What challenges do you commonly face at the institution (administration & management)?
   _____

   6.1. How does the mentioned challenges affect you as academic members?
   _____

   6.2. How do the challenges affect students in general?
   _____

7. Do you think the mentioned challenges affect students in their acquisition of skills?

_____

_____

8. How do you think these challenges affect students in acquiring skills in their different areas of study?

_____

9. Do you Community Technical Colleges gets enough support from the stakeholder including the government?

_____

10. How is the current situation of the college in terms of the following;
    a. Teachers?

_____

_____

    b. Teaching and learning resources?

_____

    c. Funding?

_____

    d. Student academic performance/acquisition of skills?

_____

    e. Trainings and professional development?

_____

11. How can challenges in Community Technical Colleges be addressed?

_____

Appendix 6. Interview guide for CTC trainees

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY TECHNICAL COLLEGE TRAINEES

IN RESEARCH OF

Situation Analysis of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi: Critical issues and practical implications affecting their operationalization

1. Introductions

   _____

2. What do you understand by practical skills acquisition?

   _____

3. What skills do we expect to gain at the end of the programme? (Specific)

   _____

4. Does the school have enough to support skills acquisition in terms of resources?

   _____

5. What challenges/obstacles do we think affect skills acquisition at this college?

   _____

6. What are we doing to address these challenges?

   _____

7. How does the following affect our skills acquisition (in positive or negative way)?

   7.1. Human resource

   _____

7.2.Teaching and learning resources

_____

7.3.Students' academic performance/acquisition of skills

_____

_____

7.4.Trainings and professional development

_____

Appendix 7. Interview guide for CTC graduates

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY TECHNICAL COLLEGE GRADUATES

IN RESEARCH OF

Situation Analysis of Community Technical Colleges in Malawi: Critical issues and practical implications affecting their operationalization

Data Collection Instrument

Interview Guide for Community Technical College Graduates team

1. What course did you study at your former institution? _____

    1.1. How long was the programme? _____

    1.2. What resources were used, needed for the programme? _____

2. How was settling after CTC and what are you currently doing?

    _____

    2.1 What do you understand by skills acquisition?

3. Do you think the college offered you all necessary skills for the industry which you are into?
    _____

4. When you compare your skills after leaving college and the ones you have now, do you think there is difference?
    _____

    Do you think the college equipped you with all necessary skills needed for the industry?
    _____

    5.1. If   not,   why?
    _____

    5.2. What do you think are the reasons for not acquiring all the necessary skills while at the

    college?

    _____

5.3. What do you think could have been done better so that skills acquisition is maximised?

_____

5.4. Do you think the college is doing enough to produce graduates with all the necessary skills for the industry? If not why?

5.5. Can you recommend Community Technical College education to your friends/ relatives?

5.6. What are the critical issues that you think are negatively affecting CTCs?