

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND COMPETENCY-BASED PROFILE

Email: [zizwamsukuma@gmail.com](mailto:zizwamsukuma@gmail.com)

Tel: (+265)999951259

(+265)882609608



## 1.0 OVERVIEW

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is an educationist and policy reform specialist with expertise in **assessment and quality assurance in education and training**. His career spans leadership roles in teacher education, higher education, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), reflecting a sustained commitment to institutional reform and regional collaboration.

From **February 2023 to February 2026**, he served as **Director of Teacher Education and Development (DTED)** at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, where he directed national teacher development programmes and advanced reforms aligned with **Malawi Vision 2063**. Prior to this, he was **Director of Quality Assurance & Enhancement at Mzuzu University (2018–2022)**, and briefly held the role of **Director of Quality Assurance at the University of Livingstonia (May 2022–February 2023)**. Earlier, he served as **Executive Director of Quality Assurance at Lerotholi Polytechnic in Lesotho (2013–2018)**, contributing to regional harmonization of quality assurance frameworks.

Dr. Msukuma's academic credentials underscore his authority in the field:

- a) **PhD in Quality Assurance** (University of Pretoria, 2018)
- b) **Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance in Higher Education** (University of Mauritius, 2021)
- c) **MBA (ESAMI, 2009)**
- d) **Bachelor of Education (Technical)** (University of Malawi, 2005)
- e) **City & Guilds Advanced Diploma in Mechanical Engineering** (Malawi Polytechnic, 1997)

With this blend of academic achievement and professional leadership, Dr. Msukuma has made significant contributions to the development of

education systems in Malawi and beyond, positioning himself as a trusted authority in **quality assurance, teacher education reform, and TVET transformation.**

## COMPETENCY-BASED SUPPORTING STATEMENT

### 1.0 Governance and Strategic Oversight

Dr Zizwa Msukuma has extensive experience in leading governance structures for academic quality assurance across higher education and technical education sectors. As Director of Quality Assurance at Mzuzu University and Executive Director of Quality Assurance at Lerotholi Polytechnic in Lesotho (2013–2018), he established and managed quality assurance directorates, aligning institutional practices with national and regional frameworks. He contributed to the development of the Malawi Qualifications Framework (2019) and the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (2015), demonstrating my ability to embed coherence and accountability into governance systems. These experiences have equipped him to provide strategic oversight of academic quality and standards, ensuring compliance while driving enhancement.

### 1.1 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and Enhancement Priorities

Dr Msukuma’s professional philosophy is enhancement-led quality assurance. He has consistently championed continuous improvement by embedding monitoring results into curriculum reform, teacher education, and institutional decision-making. For example;

- 1.1.1 As **Executive Director of Quality Assurance at Lerotholi Polytechnic (2013–2018)**, he spearheaded the accreditation of over **10 academic programmes** with the Council for Higher Education (CHE), embedding risk-based monitoring and external

examining systems that strengthened institutional performance. Again, he Served as a member of the Council Higher Education’s Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee (HEQAC) in Lesotho.

**1.1.2 As Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement at Mzuzu University (2018–2022),** he coordinated and led the accreditation of 17 new programmes in 2021, ensuring compliance with national standards while fostering innovation in teaching and learning.

**1.1.3 As Director of Quality Assurance at the University of Livingstonia (May 2022–February 2023),** he oversaw the accreditation of 7 new programmes in 2022, streamlining approval processes and embedding enhancement principles into programme design.

**2.1.1 As Director of Teacher Education and Development in the Ministry of Education (February 2023–February 2026),** he directed national teacher development programmes, embedding QA principles into teacher education and aligning reforms with Malawi Vision 2063. In this role, he also **coordinated and facilitated leadership training programmes for school head teachers across the country,** equipping school leaders with essential leadership skills to strengthen governance and improve outcomes in primary schools. Furthermore, he Spearheaded the introduction of Diploma programs for Primary school teachers in Teacher Training Colleges to professionalize and enhance their career. Again, he Advocated for competence-based training and continuous professional development across Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs).

These roles required balancing compliance with innovation, ensuring that quality assurance processes contributed directly to institutional success in national and international performance frameworks, including TEF-related enhancement priorities.

## **1.2 Monitoring and Data-Informed Culture:**

Dr Zizwa Msukuma designed and implemented monitoring systems that capture holistic learning outcomes across cognitive, affective, psychomotor, communication, and independence domains. His work has emphasized the importance of robust data analysis and reporting to inform strategic priorities. For example, at TEVET Authority Malawi, he developed monitoring instruments that linked quality assurance to employability outcomes, ensuring that data informed both curriculum design and resource allocation. Again, he Promoted harmonization of TVET standards across Southern Africa.

Dr Zizwa Msukuma is committed to fostering a strong data-informed culture where monitoring results underpin institutional decision-making and enhancement strategies.

## **1.3 Leadership and Team Management**

Dr Zizwa Msukuma brings proven leadership and management skills, having directed quality assurance units in multiple institutions. He has successfully built and motivated teams, fostering collaboration across schools, departments, and external stakeholders. His leadership style emphasizes clarity of vision, supportive mentoring, and accountability. He has worked in partnership with ministries, universities, and development partners, ensuring that quality assurance is understood not as a compliance burden but as a shared responsibility that enhances student outcomes and institutional reputation.

## 1.4 Policy Drafting and Compliance Guidance

Dr Zizwa Msukuma has authored and reviewed academic quality policies, guidance documents, and monitoring frameworks across institutions. At Lerotholi Polytechnic, he drafted policies that established the institution's first quality assurance directorate, while at Mzuzu University he simplified course approval and review processes to reduce duplication and strengthen compliance.

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma has published thirty-two (32) peer-reviewed papers spanning education policy, quality assurance, curriculum reform, governance, and human capital development. These works collectively demonstrate his sustained contribution to advancing inclusive, competence-based education systems and institutional transformation across Malawi and the wider Southern African region. His publications bridge theory, policy, and practice, offering actionable frameworks that continue to shape national and regional discourse on education reform and sustainable development.

Beyond institutional policies and papers, he has authored fifteen (15) books spanning teacher education, higher education, TVET reform, secondary education, basic education, early childhood development, and research methodology. These Books include:

1. **Teachers Education and Quality Assurance: *Bridging Classroom Realities and Professional Development***
2. **Accreditation, Governance and Total Quality Management in Higher Education: *Pathways for Malawi's Development***
3. **Cross-Sectoral Quality Assurance and Leadership in Malawi's Secondary and Higher Education: *Towards an Integrated Governance Framework***

4. **Early Childhood Development in Malawi: *Policy Coherence, Quality Assurance, and Institutional Alignment***
5. **Governance and Innovation in TVET: *Building Skills for Malawi's Future***
6. **Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Industry: *A Guide Book and Resource***
7. **Quality Assurance, Equity, and Teacher Competence in Basic Education: *The Resource that connects Policy, Practice and Inclusive Reform***
8. **Research Methodology Manual: *A Scholarly Guide to Academic Inquiry***
9. **Skills for the Future: *Reforming Secondary Education***
10. **Quality Assurance Model/Approach for Higher Education Institutions**
11. **Reforming Education in Malawi: *Foundations, Priorities, and Strategic Pathways for Transformation***
12. **Transforming Education Systems: *Leadership, Governance, and Quality Assurance for Sustainable Change***
13. **Managing Private Schools and Colleges in Malawi: *A Practical Handbook for Quality and Compliance***
14. **Research Roadmap: A Scholarly Guide to Foundations, Methodology, and Inquiry**
15. **Harmonising External Quality Assurance in Higher Education: **Institutional Audit Framework (AIF), Programme Accreditation Framework (PAF), and Tuition Provider Framework (TPF) through Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)****

These publications provide evidence-based solutions and frameworks that continue to shape policy and practice in the education sector, demonstrating

his ability to influence both institutional and national approaches to quality assurance.

## 1.5 VISION AND INFLUENCE

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma champions inclusive, high-quality education as a driver of national development. His leadership bridges policy and practice, positioning Malawi as a regional leader in education reform. His evidence-based approach and strategic foresight make him a trusted anchor for donor investment and stakeholder engagement.

## 2.0 Conclusion

Dr Zizwa Msukuma is confident that his qualifications, professional experience, and commitment to enhancement-led quality assurance align closely with the requirements of the *forward-looking institutions*. I bring a proven ability to provide governance oversight, lead TEF-related enhancement priorities, embed monitoring systems, manage teams effectively, and draft policies that balance compliance with innovation. With this foundation, he is prepared to contribute meaningfully to institutional development and to advance approaches that place quality enhancement at the core of academic practice.

### Certification:

Dr Zizwa Msukuma, the undersigned, certifies that to the best of his knowledge and belief, this profile correctly describes himself, his qualifications, and his experience, and is available to undertake any assignment once offered. He understands that any misstatement or misrepresentation described herein may lead to his disqualification by the organization requiring his services.

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma

{Feb, 2026}



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Name	Signature	Date
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PORTFOLIO AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EDUCATION SECTOR

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**Dr. Zizwa Msukuma, (PhD) Education Strategist | Policy Reform  
Specialist | Quality Assurance Expert**



## Profile Overview

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a distinguished Malawian education strategist, scholar, and policy reform specialist whose career spans teacher education, higher education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and governance reform. His scholarship and professional leadership have consistently advanced **quality assurance, curriculum innovation, and institutional development** across Malawi and the wider Southern African region.

## 1. Research Focus and Thematic Contributions

### 1.1 Quality Assurance & Governance:

- a) Contributed to the development of the frameworks such as the **Lesotho Qualifications Framework (2015)** and the **Malawi Qualifications Framework (2019)**, embedding coherence and accountability into national education systems.

- b) Authored the **Curriculum Framework for the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry**, strengthening professional standards in education.
- c) Published extensively on accreditation, monitoring and evaluation, and institutional capacity-building.

## **1.2 Teacher Education & Competence Development:**

- a) Investigated competence gaps among preschool teachers in rural Community-Based Child Care Centers (CBCCs), recommending structured CPD programmes, embedding competence standards into training curricula, and strengthening monitoring systems.
- b) Directed national teacher development programmes as **Director of Teacher Education and Development (DTED)**, embedding competence-based training and professionalization of primary school teachers.

## **1.3 Basic Education Reform:**

- a) Examined monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in Malawi's basic education sector, highlighting gains in enrolment and gender parity but identifying persistent challenges in completion rates, repetition, and teacher shortages.
- b) Advocated for integrated M&E systems to foster a culture of continuous improvement and evidence-based decision-making.

## **1.4 Cross-Sectoral Quality Assurance:**

- a) Proposed an **Integrated Governance Framework** to harmonize policies across higher, secondary, and

vocational education, strengthen institutional collaboration, embed continuous monitoring, and expand stakeholder participation.

b) Positioned Malawi's QA reforms within global debates on equity, accountability, and sustainability.

### **1.5 Higher Education Transformation:**

a) Explored the **Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM)** as a strategic instrument for aligning academic programmes with national priorities under **Vision 2063**.

b) Proposed a rationalization model anchored in programme audits, curriculum reform, stakeholder engagement, inclusivity, and lifelong learning pathways.

### **1.6 Early Childhood Development (ECD):**

a) Critically assessed policy misalignment between Malawi's Gender and Education ministries, identifying fragmentation, donor dependence, and equity gaps.

b) Recommended coherent governance structures, strengthened institutional capacity, evidence-informed decision-making, and inclusive reforms targeting vulnerable groups.

### **1.7 Extractive Industry Governance:**

a) Pioneered research on integrating **education policy into extractive industry governance**, emphasizing human capital development for sustainable resource management.

b) Highlighted curriculum alignment, technical training, and qualifications frameworks as tools to enhance regulatory capacity and transparency.

## 1.8 UNESCO Engagement:

- a) His expertise in **Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TEVET)** and quality assurance was leveraged by **UNESCO Malawi** to develop crucial standards for the TEVET regulatory body.
- b) This engagement demonstrates his reputation as a **trusted authority in the field**, recognized internationally for advancing quality benchmarks in vocational education.

## 2.0 Scholarly Output

- **Publications:** Dr. Msukuma has authored **32 peer-reviewed papers** and **15 influential books** covering teacher education, higher education governance, TVET reform, secondary education, early childhood development, and research methodology. His works bridge **theory, policy, and practice**, offering actionable frameworks that continue to shape national and regional education discourse.

### 2.1 Signature Publications:

- a) *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi*
- b) *Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Industry*
- c) *Research Methodology Manual – A Scholarly Guide to Academic Inquiry*
- d) *Accreditation, Governance and Total Quality Management in Higher Education*

e) *Cross-Sectoral Quality Assurance and Leadership in Malawi's Secondary and Higher Education*

### 3.0 Impact and Legacy

Dr. Msukuma's portfolio demonstrates a **holistic vision of education reform**—one that integrates governance, quality assurance, competence-based training, and inclusivity. His contributions have:

- a) Strengthened institutional accountability and accreditation systems.
- b) Advanced teacher professionalization and competence development.
- c) Positioned Malawi's education reforms within **regional and global frameworks** such as SDG 4 and AU/CEESA.
- d) Provided evidence-based strategies for sustainable transformation of education systems.

### 4.0 Closing Statement

Through thirty-two published papers, fifteen books, and international engagements including UNESCO Malawi, Dr. Zizwa Msukuma has established himself as a leading voice in education reform and quality assurance. His research portfolio reflects a commitment to bridging policy and practice, advancing inclusive education, and embedding governance excellence into national and regional systems.

# **INTEGRATING EDUCATION POLICY INTO EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY GOVERNANCE:**

**BUILDING HUMAN CAPITAL FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MALAWI**



**By Zizwa Msukuma - PhD**

**INTEGRATING EDUCATION POLICY INTO EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY  
GOVERNANCE: BUILDING HUMAN CAPITAL FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT IN MALAWI**

**Zizwa Msukuma**, PhD (University of Pretoria), MBA (ESAMI), Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance in Higher Education (University of Mauritius), B.Ed. (Technical) (University of Malawi); *Consultant – Quality Assurance & Education Reform*;

**Email: zizwamsukuma@gmail.com | Tel: +265 999 951 259**

**Abstract**

The extractive industry in Malawi faces persistent challenges of weak governance, limited regulatory capacity, and insufficient human capital to manage complex legal, environmental, and investment frameworks. While global debates often emphasize legal reforms, little attention has been given to the role of education policy in preparing skilled professionals—lawyers, regulators, and administrators—needed for sustainable resource management. This neglect has weakened the ability of resource-rich jurisdictions to align extractive governance with sustainable development goals.

This study investigated how education policy could be strategically integrated into extractive industry governance, assessing the extent to which Malawi’s education system equips professionals for legal, regulatory, and technical roles in resource management. It also proposed recommendations for strengthening human capital development in alignment with national strategies.

A qualitative approach was employed, combining document analysis of Malawi’s education policies, national qualifications frameworks, and extractive governance laws with comparative case studies from Botswana and Ghana. Key informant interviews with policymakers, education experts, and industry regulators provided triangulated insights, while an analytical framework connected education policy outcomes to governance capacity in extractive industries.

The study contributed to scholarship at the intersection of education policy and extractive industry law by showing how reforms such as curriculum alignment, technical training, and qualifications frameworks enhanced regulatory capacity, strengthened transparency, and advanced sustainable development. The findings offered actionable recommendations for policymakers in Malawi to bridge the gap between education and resource governance.

**Keywords:** Education Policy; Human Capital Development; Extractive Industry Governance; Sustainable Development; Legal Frameworks; Capacity Building.

#### **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I, **Dr. Zizwa Msukuma**, hereby declare that this manuscript titled *“Integrating Education Policy into Extractive Industry Governance: Building Human Capital for Sustainable Development in Malawi”* is my original work. It has not been previously published in any journal, book, or website, nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere.

I further confirm that all sources used have been properly acknowledged and cited in accordance with the **OSCOLA referencing style**.

**Signed:** 

**Name:** Dr. Zizwa Msukuma

# RESEARCH STUDY AIM

This study examines how to integrate education policy within the extractive industry sector to build human capital and promote **sustainable development in Malawi.**

The research focuses on:

- ✓ *Aligning educational initiatives with industry needs*
- ✓ *Enhancing skills training and workforce development*
- ✓ *Ensuring equitable access to quality education for communities affected by mining activities*



**By Zizwa Msukuma - PhD**



# **An Assessment of Policy Frameworks for Advancing Pedagogical Competence of Preschool Teachers in Malawi**

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**By Zizwa Msukuma, PhD**  
(Assessment & Quality Assurance Specialist)

## **ABSTRACT**

### **1.1 Purpose**

The study aimed to examine Malawi's preschool teacher competence policy environment, focusing on how national frameworks such as the Malawi Qualifications Framework (MAQF) and ECCE guidelines align with global standards and contribute to classroom practice.

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

Despite the existence of policy frameworks, preschool teachers in Malawi—particularly in rural Community-Based Child Care Centers (CBCCs)—continue to face competence gaps due to weak implementation, limited monitoring, and resource constraints.

### **1.3 Methodology**

A qualitative case study approach was employed, combining document analysis with semi-structured interviews of policymakers, education officers, and preschool practitioners. Comparative insights were drawn from regional and global ECCE frameworks.

### **1.4 Findings**

Policies demonstrated alignment with international standards and inclusivity goals. However, implementation gaps, inadequate CPD opportunities, and weak monitoring mechanisms undermined teacher competence and classroom outcomes.

### **1.5 Discussion**

The study highlighted fragmentation between policy aspirations and practice. Comparative analysis showed Malawi's frameworks aligned in principle with regional/global priorities but diverged in operationalization. Opportunities exist for integrating competence standards into training curricula and strengthening CPD pathways.

## **1.6 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study concluded that bridging policy and practice is essential for improving preschool teacher competence. Recommendations include structured CPD programmes, embedding competence standards within MAQF-linked training, and strengthening monitoring and resource support. These measures can enhance equity and quality in Malawi's preschool education sector.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study investigated Malawi's preschool teacher competence policy environment, focusing on the alignment between national frameworks and classroom realities. The research was guided by the Malawi Qualifications Framework (MAQF) and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) guidelines, which emphasize inclusivity and professionalization of preschool teaching.

The problem addressed was the persistent gap between policy aspirations and practice, particularly in rural Community-Based Child Care Centers (CBCCs), where teachers often lack adequate training, continuous professional development (CPD), and resource support.

Using a qualitative case study approach, the study combined document analysis with semi-structured interviews of policymakers, education officers, and preschool practitioners. Comparative insights were drawn from regional and global ECCE frameworks to situate Malawi's experience within broader trends.

Findings revealed that while Malawi's frameworks align with international standards, implementation is undermined by weak monitoring, limited CPD opportunities, and resource constraints. Teachers struggle to translate policy into effective classroom practice, resulting in uneven quality of early learning outcomes.

The discussion highlighted fragmentation between policy coherence and operational realities, showing Malawi's divergence from regional and global systems that embed competence standards and structured CPD.

The study concluded that bridging policy and practice is essential for strengthening preschool teacher competence. Recommendations include:

- a) Establishing structured CPD programmes.
- b) Embedding competence standards into MAQF-linked training curricula.
- c) Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- d) Expanding resource support, especially in rural CBCCs.

By developing a conceptual framework linking policy, competence, and classroom outcomes, the study contributes to education policy discourse and offers actionable strategies for improving equity and quality in Malawi's preschool sector.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a distinguished education policy expert, researcher, and prolific author with extensive experience in curriculum reform, qualifications frameworks, and quality assurance systems across Southern Africa. He played a leading role in the development of the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (2015) and the Malawi Qualifications Framework (2019), and has authored influential works on education reform, governance, and professional development.

Dr. Msukuma's scholarship bridges theory, policy, and practice, with a strong focus on equity, inclusivity, and competence-based education. His recent publication, *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi*, reflects his commitment to advancing education systems that serve all learners.

Currently, Dr. Msukuma is leading integration of cross-sectoral quality assurance and leadership frameworks in Malawi's education system. His work emphasizes examiner-friendly presentation, methodological transparency, and stakeholder engagement, positioning him as a visionary voice in education policy and reform.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISMS IN BASIC EDUCATION: TOWARDS A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

**Dr Zizwa Msukuma**

Assessment and Quality Assurance Specialist



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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms in Malawi's basic education sector, focusing on their role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The purpose was to assess how current frameworks contribute to access, equity, and quality, while identifying systemic gaps that hinder sustained progress. A mixed-methods design was employed, integrating quantitative analysis of enrolment, retention, completion, and teacher-pupil ratios with qualitative insights from policy documents, interviews, and stakeholder perspectives. Findings revealed that M&E mechanisms have supported notable gains in enrolment, gender parity, and reduced dropout rates, aligning with regional and global benchmarks. However, persistent challenges remain, including low completion rates, high repetition, teacher shortages, and classroom overcrowding. These limitations highlight the inadequacy of fragmented monitoring systems in driving holistic reforms. The study concludes that effective M&E requires integration into national frameworks, investment in institutional capacity, and participatory approaches that engage schools, communities, and development partners. Strengthening these mechanisms will enhance accountability, inform evidence-based decision-making, and embed continuous improvement into everyday educational practice.

**Keywords:** Monitoring and Evaluation, Basic Education, Educational Equity, Quality Assurance, Continuous Improvement, Malawi

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Malawi has made significant progress in expanding access to primary education, with enrolment rising by 47% between 2008 and 2018 and gender parity sustained at entry levels. Dropout rates have declined, reflecting improved retention. However, completion rates remain stagnant at 52%, repetition rates are high at 24.5%, and classroom overcrowding persists, with pupil-permanent classroom ratios averaging 120:1. Teacher shortages also constrain quality, despite improvements in the pupil-qualified teacher ratio.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms have contributed to gains in access and equity, but their effectiveness in sustaining quality and retention is limited. Current systems remain fragmented, donor-driven, and insufficiently integrated into national frameworks.

### 1.2 Key Findings

**1.2.1 Access:** Enrolment and net intake rates improved significantly.

**1.2.2 Equity:** Gender parity achieved at entry levels, but disparities persist in upper primary.

**1.2.3 Quality:** Teacher shortages and overcrowded classrooms undermine learning.

**1.2.4 Retention:** Dropout rates declined, but completion and repetition remain problematic.

### 1.3 Policy Recommendations

**1.3.1 Government & Policy Makers:** Integrate M&E into national frameworks, strengthen institutional capacity, and reduce reliance on external evaluations.

**1.3.2 School Leaders & Teachers:** Use M&E data to inform classroom practices and address retention challenges.

**1.3.3 Development Partners:** Align support with national priorities and invest in capacity-building.

**1.3.4 Communities & Parents:** Engage in participatory monitoring to enhance accountability and inclusivity.

## **1.4 Implications**

Strengthened M&E systems will enhance accountability, support evidence-based decision-making, and embed continuous improvement into everyday practice. This requires investment in infrastructure, teacher welfare, and community engagement, ensuring that gains in access translate into equitable and quality learning outcomes.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is an education policy and quality assurance specialist with extensive experience in developing national and regional frameworks for higher and basic education. He contributed to the design of the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (2015) and the Malawi Qualifications Framework (2019), both of which strengthened accreditation and quality assurance systems in Southern Africa. He also developed the Curriculum Framework for the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry, reflecting his commitment to advancing professional standards in education.

Dr. Msukuma is the author of two influential books: *Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Industry* and *Research Methodology Manual: A User-Friendly Guide to Mastering Research Techniques*, which serve both undergraduate and postgraduate students in higher education institutions. His research portfolio includes 27 other publications, notably *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi*, underscoring his dedication to inclusive education and systemic reform.

His expertise spans curriculum design, monitoring and evaluation, accreditation policy, and institutional capacity-building. Through his scholarship and practice, Dr. Msukuma continues to promote equity, accountability, and a culture of continuous improvement in education systems across Africa.

# **CROSS-SECTORAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN MALAWI'S EDUCATION SYSTEM: TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK**

**Dr Zizwa Msukuma**

**(Assessment and Quality  
Assurance Specialist)**



## **ABSTRACT**

Quality assurance in education is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of equity, accountability, and sustainability worldwide. Despite global advances in harmonized accreditation and monitoring systems, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to face challenges of fragmentation, limited institutional capacity, and uneven implementation. In Malawi, quality assurance mechanisms exist across higher, secondary, and vocational education, but they remain siloed and inconsistently applied, undermining coherence and effectiveness.

This study addresses these gaps by employing a qualitative research design that combined policy analysis with thematic review of institutional practices. Data were drawn from national policy documents, institutional reports, and scholarly literature, enabling systematic comparison across subsectors. Framework analysis guided the coding of evidence around four pillars: policy alignment, institutional coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and stakeholder participation.

Findings revealed weak policy harmonization, limited institutional collaboration, uneven monitoring and evaluation practices, and minimal stakeholder engagement. These weaknesses reduced accountability and hindered the achievement of equitable and sustainable education outcomes.

To respond, the study proposes an Integrated Governance Framework for Cross-Sectoral Quality Assurance. The framework harmonizes policies, strengthens institutional collaboration, embeds monitoring and evaluation as a continuous cycle, and expands stakeholder participation. By situating Malawi's experience within global and regional debates, the study contributes to scholarship while offering a practical roadmap for reform.

The framework aligns national priorities with international commitments such as Sustainable Development Goal 4, advancing equity, quality, and sustainability in education.

**Keywords:** Quality Assurance, Governance, Education System, Malawi, Cross-Sectoral Integration, Policy Reform

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/POLICY BRIEF**

### **Cross-Sectoral Quality Assurance in Malawi's Education System: Towards an Integrated Governance Framework**

#### **1.1 Background**

Quality assurance (QA) in education is globally recognized as a cornerstone of equity, accountability, and sustainability. While advanced systems in Europe, Asia, and North America emphasize harmonization, monitoring, and stakeholder participation, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to face challenges of fragmentation, limited institutional capacity, and uneven implementation. Malawi reflects these regional trends: despite the existence of QA mechanisms across higher, secondary, and vocational education, they remain siloed, inconsistently applied, and insufficiently participatory.

#### **1.2 Problem Statement**

Malawi's education system suffers from weak policy alignment, limited institutional coordination, uneven monitoring and evaluation, and minimal stakeholder participation. These weaknesses undermine coherence, reduce accountability, and hinder the achievement of equitable and sustainable education outcomes.

#### **1.3 Methodological Approach**

The study employed a qualitative research design, combining:

- a) Policy analysis of national frameworks (e.g., ESIP II, NCHE QA Framework, TEVETA guidelines).
- b) Review of institutional reports and accreditation practices.

- c) Scholarly literature situating Malawi within global and regional QA debates.

Framework analysis guided the coding of evidence around four pillars: policy alignment, institutional coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and stakeholder participation.

## **1.4 Major Findings**

**1.4.1 Policy Alignment:** Subsector policies operate independently, leading to duplication and inconsistencies.

**1.4.2 Institutional Coordination:** Ministries and agencies work in silos, with limited mechanisms for collaboration.

**1.4.3 Monitoring & Evaluation:** Accreditation processes exist in higher education, but basic and secondary rely on sporadic inspections with weak data systems.

**1.4.4 Stakeholder Participation:** Teachers, learners, parents, and communities are minimally engaged, reducing accountability and responsiveness.

## **1.5 Proposed Framework**

The study introduced an **Integrated Governance Framework for Cross-Sectoral Quality Assurance**, designed to:

- a) Harmonize policies across subsectors.
- b) Establish sustained institutional collaboration.
- c) Embed monitoring and evaluation as a continuous cycle.
- d) Expand stakeholder participation for inclusivity and accountability.

## **1.6 Policy and Practical Implications**

**1.6.1 Policy:** Align subsector policies with Sustainable Development Goal 4; create joint accountability structures; institutionalize monitoring cycles; empower communities and teachers.

**1.6.2 Practice:** Provide policymakers, institutions, and communities with a roadmap for reform that is both locally relevant and globally resonant. Strengthen equity, quality, accountability, and sustainability in Malawi's education system.

## **1.7 Contribution**

By situating Malawi's experience within global and regional debates, the study contributes to scholarship while offering a practical tool for reform. The framework advances systemic integration, aligning national priorities with international commitments and providing a pathway toward equitable and sustainable education outcomes.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in curriculum innovation, sectoral reform, and quality assurance in higher education. He has designed and led multi-institutional programs that integrate national policy priorities with scholarly research, ensuring clarity, impact, and resonance across the education sector. His expertise spans outcome framing across knowledge, affective, psychomotor, and communication domains, operational excellence in curriculum design, and the integration of ethical values and lifelong learning into program outcomes.

Dr. Msukuma has published extensively on education governance, policy alignment, and quality assurance systems, with a particular focus on equity and inclusion in Malawi and the wider Sub-Saharan African region. His academic work is distinguished by meticulous manuscript structuring, journal-ready writing, and the use of visual matrices, tables, and diagrams to scaffold learning and stakeholder engagement.

Most recently, he finalized the paper *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi*, which contributes to national and regional debates on inclusive education governance. This publication strengthens his portfolio of scholarship by addressing systemic inequities and proposing actionable frameworks for policy reform.

His contributions reflect a balance of visionary strategy, rigorous analysis, and practical relevance, positioning him as a leading voice in advancing education quality and governance reform in Malawi.



# **ALIGNING ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES WITH NATIONAL PRIORITIES:**

**RELEVANCE INDICATORS** IN THE TRANSFORMATION  
OF PROGRAMME AND QUALIFICATION MIX



By

**Zizwa Msukuma, PhD**

## Executive Summary

The study examined the transformation of Malawi's higher education system through the reform of the Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM), focusing on how relevance indicators serve as strategic instruments for aligning academic programmes with national development priorities. It explored the intersection between policy frameworks—Vision 2063, the National Education Sector Plan (NESP 2020–2030), and the Malawi Qualifications Framework (MQF)—and institutional practices that shape programme relevance, quality, and responsiveness.

Through a mixed-methods approach combining document analysis, stakeholder consultations, and comparative benchmarking with regional frameworks such as the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the study revealed that relevance indicators are pivotal in driving curriculum transformation, employability, inclusivity, and global competitiveness.

Findings showed that while policy intent is strong, institutional implementation remains uneven, constrained by limited stakeholder engagement, resource gaps, and weak internal quality assurance systems. The study therefore proposed a systemic rationalization model anchored in five pillars:

1. Programme audit and relevance mapping;
2. Curriculum reform for employability and innovation;
3. Stakeholder engagement and governance alignment;
4. Quality assurance compliance with MQF descriptors; and

## 5. Inclusivity and lifelong learning pathways.

The study concluded that PQM transformation is a continuous process of renewal, requiring collaboration among government, institutions, regulators, and communities. By operationalizing relevance indicators, Malawi's higher education can evolve into a dynamic, inclusive, and globally competitive system—one that produces graduates equipped to advance Vision 2063 and contribute meaningfully to regional and global development.

## About *the Author*



Dr. Zizwa Msukuma, PhD, is an education strategist, scholar, and consultant specializing in quality assurance, curriculum design, and governance.

He has contributed to national and regional qualifications frameworks and authored key works on equity in education.

## Executive Summary

This study examines the transformation of Malawi's higher education through Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM)

It demonstrates how relevance indicators—employability, inclusivity, assurance, and global competitiveness—can align academic programmes with national priorities and Vision 2063.

The study proposes a rationalization model to ensure higher education remains responsive, inclusive, and globally competitive.

# INSTITUTIONAL PLACEMENT OF ECD IN MALAWI: POLICY MISALIGNMENT BETWEEN GENDER & EDUCATION MINISTRIES

*Advancing Coherence, Quality, and Equity in Reform*



Dr Zizwa  
Msukuma

*(Assessment &  
Education Quality  
Assurance Specialist)*

## Abstract

This study critically examines governance structures, quality assurance mechanisms, and institutional arrangements within Malawi's education sector, situating the analysis within regional and global debates on education reform. Drawing on comparative frameworks and empirical evidence, the research identifies systemic strengths—such as emerging accountability structures and stakeholder engagement—alongside persistent challenges of fragmentation, misalignment, and limited institutional capacity. The findings underscore the urgent need for coherent, evidence-informed strategies that can bridge diagnostic insights with actionable reforms. Chapter 7 synthesizes these tensions, while Chapter 8 advances policy recommendations designed to enhance alignment, strengthen institutional capacity, promote evidence-based decision making, foster stakeholder ownership, and advance equity and inclusion.

The conclusion emphasizes that sustainable reform requires not only technical solutions but also political will, institutional commitment, and continuous stakeholder engagement. By operationalizing these recommendations, Malawi can move toward an education system that is equitable, coherent, and capable of driving national development.

**Keywords:** Malawi education sector; governance; quality assurance; policy coherence; institutional capacity; stakeholder engagement; equity and inclusion; comparative education; education reform; sustainable development

## Policy Executive Summary

### Purpose of the Study

- a) Examined the evolution of Malawi's Early Childhood Development (ECD) policies within national, regional, and global contexts.
- b) Assessed governance, quality assurance, coherence, equity, and sustainability across the education sector.
- c) Benchmarked Malawi's experience against regional peers (e.g., Zambia, Rwanda, Botswana, Kenya).

### Key Findings

- a) Fragmentation: Overlapping mandates between ministries and weak coordination at district level.
- b) Donor Dependence: Heavy reliance on external financing undermines sustainability.
- c) Equity Gaps: Persistent disparities in access for rural learners, girls, children with disabilities.
- d) Quality Concerns: Inadequate caregiver training, infrastructure, and monitoring systems.
- e) Strengths: Strong community ownership of CBCCs, recognition of ECD's importance, and active support from development partners.

### Policy Recommendations

#### 1. Enhance Policy Alignment & Coherence

- a. Central coordinating mechanism within MoE.
- b. Regular review cycles aligned with AU/CESA frameworks.

#### 2. Strengthen Institutional Capacity & Accountability

- a. Invest in QA units, training, and monitoring systems.
- b. Introduce measurable accountability indicators.

#### 3. Promote Evidence-Informed Decision Making

- a. Institutionalize national assessments and regional benchmarking.
- b. Strengthen research-policy linkages via universities.

#### 4. Foster Stakeholder Engagement & Ownership

- a. Expand participatory platforms for communities, teachers, learners.
- b. Align donor support with national priorities.

## 5. Advance Equity & Inclusion

- a. Integrate inclusive education principles into teacher training and curriculum.
- b. Target interventions for vulnerable groups.

### Comparative Lessons

- a. Rwanda/Botswana: Policy harmonization improved coherence.
- b. South Africa: QA frameworks strengthened accountability.
- c. Kenya: NASMLA informed curriculum and teacher reform.
- d. Tanzania/Ghana: Stakeholder engagement enhanced sustainability.
- e. Ethiopia/Lesotho: Inclusive reforms reduced marginalization.

### Key Stats

- a. >60% of rural children rely on CBCCs with volunteer caregivers.
- b. Donor funding accounts for ~40% of ECD program financing.
- c. Malawi lags behind regional peers in institutionalized national assessments.

## Author's Bio

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar, formerly Director of Teacher Education and Development in the Ministry of Education, Science & Technology. He holds a PhD in Assessment and Education Quality Assurance from the University of Pretoria and has led institutional reform and quality assurance initiatives across TEVET Authority Malawi, Lerotholi Polytechnic (Lesotho), Mzuzu University, and the University of Livingstonia.

Dr. Msukuma has authored and co-authored a growing body of scholarly and policy-relevant publications, including the recently completed paper *Quality Assurance in Malawi's Higher Education: Balancing Institutional Autonomy and Policy Coherence*. His other works include:

Dr. Msukuma has authored a growing body of scholarly and policy-relevant publications, including:

1. **Repositioning TEVET in Malawi: A Strategic Analysis of Institutional Governance and Reform Pathways**
2. **Integrating Lifelong Learning into Malawi's TVET System: A Policy Blueprint for Inclusive and Future-Ready Skills Development**
3. **Quality Assurance in TVET: Comparative Lessons and Frameworks for Institutional Strengthening**
4. **Agri-TVET and Rural Transformation: Linking Agricultural Training to Community Resilience and Economic Empowerment**
5. **Total Quality Management Framework for Private Universities in Malawi: Aligning Governance, Accountability and National Development- Applying TQM Principles to Enhance Institutional Performance and Accountability**
6. **Institutional Placement of ECD in Malawi: Policy Misalignment between Gender and Education Ministries: A Comparative Study of Institutional Placement and Governance Misalignment between Gender and Education Ministries**
7. **Manual on Research Methodology: A Practical Guide for Postgraduate Students and Education Practitioners Conducting Policy-Relevant Research**

8. **Quality Assurance in Malawi’s Higher Education System: Balancing Autonomy and Coherence** — A comprehensive study that integrates global, regional, and national perspectives on QA, offering actionable policy recommendations for Malawi’s universities and aligning reforms with Malawi 2063.
9. **Higher Education Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa: Comparative Pathways for Policy Coherence** — A practical resource for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners, providing comparative lessons from Zambia, South Africa, and Malawi, and offering frameworks to strengthen governance and QA systems across the region.

His work is distinguished by its integration of comparative analysis, stakeholder engagement, and operational clarity — often combining academic articles with policy briefs, toolkits, and workshop facilitation. Dr. Msukuma is deeply committed to transforming education sector governance in Malawi and the region, and continues to lead efforts that align national reforms with global frameworks such as SDG 4, AU/CESA, and the Global Education Monitoring Report.



# Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) in Malawi

From TEVET Foundations to Higher  
Education Transformation

*A Catalyst for Graduate Employability,  
Innovation, and Inclusive National Development*

*By Zizwa Msukuma, PhD*

# Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) as a Catalyst for Graduate Employability, Innovation, and Inclusive National Development in Malawi

## Executive Summary

### 1.0 Introduction

This study examined the transformative potential of **Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET)** in Malawi's higher education system. It integrated conceptual analysis, policy review, and comparative case studies to assess how CBET can align national education reforms with **Vision 2063** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. The research demonstrated that CBET is not merely a pedagogical innovation but a strategic national development pathway.

### 2.0 Methodological Framework

The methodology combined **conceptual analysis, policy review, and comparative case studies**, supported by diverse data sources and analytical lenses. This ensured theoretical grounding and empirical validation. Triangulation of evidence enhanced rigor, transparency, and inclusivity, positioning CBET as a credible reform strategy.

### 3.0 Key Findings

#### 3.1 Graduate Employability

- a) CBET strengthens employability through competence demonstration, workplace learning, internships, and digital literacy.
- b) Employment rates consistently exceed **80%**, internship completion surpasses **70%**, and digital proficiency is markedly higher among CBET graduates.
- c) Graduates are workplace-ready, adaptable, and competitive in both local and global markets.

#### 3.2 Innovation and Productivity

- a) CBET fosters applied research, patents, start-ups, and community-impact projects.
- b) Academic staff productivity increases through peer-reviewed publications, innovation outputs, and grant acquisition.

- c) Institutions become engines of innovation, contributing directly to industrial growth and competitiveness.

### **3.3 Inclusive Education**

- a) CBET embeds ethics, integrity, gender equity, and rural inclusion into curricula.
- b) Female participation in STEM programmes rises, rural learners gain access to flexible pathways, and disadvantaged groups benefit from public-private partnerships.
- c) Community engagement projects reinforce social cohesion and inclusivity.

### **3.4 National Development**

- a) CBET drives Vision 2063 goals of competitiveness, industrial growth, and sustainable transformation.
- b) It aligns with SDGs: **Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work (SDG 8), Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9), and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10).**
- c) Higher education becomes a cornerstone of national development and global competitiveness.

### **3.5 Challenges**

- a) Persistent funding constraints limit infrastructure, innovation hubs, and digital platforms.
- b) Infrastructure gaps, especially in rural institutions, undermine inclusivity.
- c) Supervision quality and staff development remain uneven, reducing the effectiveness of CBET delivery.

### **3.6 Enablers**

- a) Strong monitoring and evaluation systems enhance accountability.
- b) Industry partnerships provide internships, workplace learning, and curriculum feedback.
- c) Government support through Vision 2063 and policy frameworks legitimizes CBET reforms.
- d) International collaboration mobilizes resources and facilitates knowledge exchange.

#### 4.0 Policy and Practice Implications

- a) **Curriculum reform** must prioritize competence-based design, integrating digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and inclusivity.
- b) **Assessment models** should shift from rote examinations to outcome-based evaluations.
- c) **Staff development** requires structured training in CBET pedagogy and industry collaboration.
- d) **Partnership frameworks** must be strengthened to align education with labour market needs and mobilize resources.
- e) Sustaining CBET depends on coordinated action by **government, universities, industry, and communities**, each playing complementary roles.

#### 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

CBET represents a **strategic pathway** for producing skilled, innovative, and globally competitive graduates. Its emphasis on **employability, inclusivity, and innovation** ensures that higher education contributes directly to sustainable national transformation.

The study calls for:

- a) **Systemic reforms** in curricula, assessment, and governance.
- b) **Sustained investment** in infrastructure, staff development, and innovation hubs.
- c) **Collective ownership** and coordinated action among government, universities, industry, and communities.

With these measures, CBET can serve as the cornerstone of Malawi's journey toward competitiveness, industrial growth, and inclusive prosperity, fully aligned with Vision 2063 and the SDGs.

## **Abstract**

This study investigated the transformative role of **Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET)** in reshaping Malawi's higher education system to align with **Vision 2063** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. The purpose of the study was to examine how CBET bridges the persistent gap between theoretical learning and workplace competencies, thereby addressing challenges of graduate unemployment, weak innovation capacity, and limited inclusivity in higher education.

The problem statement highlighted the dominance of content-based curricula that prioritizes knowledge acquisition over competence demonstration, leaving graduates ill-prepared for dynamic labour markets. To address this, the study employed a **conceptual analysis methodology**, integrating policy review, comparative case studies, and theoretical frameworks such as Human Capital Theory, Constructivist Learning, and Inclusive Education paradigms.

Key findings confirmed that CBET enhances **graduate employability** through competence demonstration, workplace learning, internships, and digital literacy, with employment rates consistently exceeding 80%. CBET fosters **innovation and productivity** by stimulating applied research, patents, start-ups, and community-impact projects, while also elevating academic staff productivity through publications and grant acquisition. Inclusivity was strengthened by embedding ethics, integrity, gender equity, and rural participation into curricula, supported by community engagement and public-private partnerships. At the national level, CBET emerged as a driver of **Vision 2063 goals**—competitiveness, industrial growth, and sustainable transformation—while aligning with SDGs on quality education, decent work, innovation, and reduced inequalities.

The implications of the study emphasized CBET as a **credible and holistic reform strategy**. Expected outcomes included enhanced employability, innovation, productivity, inclusivity, and sustainable national transformation. The study called for systemic reforms in curriculum design, assessment models, staff development, and partnership frameworks, alongside sustained investment and collective ownership by government, universities, industry, and communities.

A faint, light blue map of Malawi is centered in the upper half of the slide, set against a dark blue background.

## *About the Research*

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- Chronicles the evolution of *Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET)* in Malawi from TEVET to Higher Education.
  - Analyzes the impact of CBET on graduate employability, innovation, and inclusive development.
  - Provides policy insights and best practices for educators, policymakers, and institutions.
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Zizwa Msukuma, PhD

# Governance–Based Quality Assurance in TVET: A Framework for Policy Reform in Malawi

**By Dr Zizwa Msukuma**

Assessment and Quality Assurance Specialist



## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated governance challenges in Malawi's Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) quality assurance (QA) system. Although formal structures exist under the TEVET Act (1999) and TEVET Policy (2013), QA processes remain fragmented, compliance-driven, and insufficiently inclusive. Policy analysis, document review, and stakeholder consultations revealed institutional fragmentation, weak oversight, limited funding, and marginal stakeholder participation as key constraints.

Comparative insights from Zambia, Kenya, and South Africa demonstrated that unified qualifications frameworks, strong QA authorities, and workplace-integrated monitoring systems enhance accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to labour market needs. Drawing on governance theories of accountability, transparency, and participation, the study proposed a governance-based QA framework structured across four domains: policy alignment, institutional coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and equity.

The framework strengthens TVET governance by embedding accountability, inclusiveness, and efficiency into QA processes. It aligns reforms with Malawi Vision 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring that QA contributes to employability, skills development, and national competitiveness while advancing scholarship on governance in education reform.

**Keywords:** Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); Quality Assurance (QA); Governance; Accountability; Transparency; Malawi 2063

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.0 Strengthening Governance-Based Quality Assurance in Malawi's TVET Sector**

#### **1.1 Background**

- a) Malawi's TVET sector is guided by the TEVET Act (1999) and TEVET Policy (2013).
- b) Current QA processes are fragmented, compliance-driven, and weakly inclusive.
- c) Challenges include institutional fragmentation, limited funding, weak oversight, and minimal stakeholder participation.

#### **1.2 Comparative Insights**

- a) Zambia: Unified qualifications framework under ZAQA → reduced fragmentation.
- b) Kenya: Strong QA authority (TVETA) with continuous improvement cycles → improved responsiveness.
- c) South Africa: Workplace-integrated QA with audits → enhanced employability and competitiveness.

#### **1.3 Proposed Framework for Malawi**

A governance-based QA model structured across four domains:

- 1.3.1. Policy Alignment – harmonize QA with Malawi Vision 2063 and SDGs.
- 1.3.2. Institutional Coordination – streamline mandates, strengthen QA bodies, and establish stakeholder councils.
- 1.3.3. Monitoring & Evaluation – transparent indicators, regular audits, continuous improvement.

1.3.4. Equity – embed gender, rural inclusion, and lifelong learning pathways.

#### **1.4 Expected Outcomes**

- a. Stronger accountability and transparency in QA processes.
- b. Improved employability and skills development.
- c. Enhanced national competitiveness.
- d. Inclusive and socially just TVET system.

#### **1.5 Recommendations**

**1.5.1 Policymakers:** Harmonize QA policies with national strategies; allocate sustainable funding; establish governance councils.

**1.5.2 Institutions:** Strengthen internal QA units; adopt transparent monitoring indicators.

**1.5.3 Stakeholders:** Employers, communities, and learners should actively participate in QA processes.

**1.5.4 Regional & Global Partners:** Support capacity building, benchmarking, and technical assistance.

#### **1.6 Call to Action**

Adopting the governance-based QA framework will position Malawi's TVET sector as a driver of national transformation, equipping learners with relevant skills while advancing equity and social justice.

## AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in governance, curriculum innovation, and quality assurance reform. He has designed and led multi-institutional programmes that embed national identity, ethical values, and lifelong learning into education outcomes. His scholarship focuses on linking governance theory with practical reforms in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Dr. Msukuma has contributed significantly to scholarship on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and quality assurance in Malawi and the wider African region. Part of his publication portfolio includes:

- a. Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi
- b. Governance and Quality Assurance in TVET: Comparative Lessons from Zambia, Kenya, and South Africa
- c. Policy Alignment and Institutional Coordination in Malawi's TVET Sector: Towards a Governance-Based Framework
- d. Embedding Accountability and Transparency in Education Reform: The Case of Malawi's TEVET Authority

Through these works, Dr. Msukuma advances both scholarship and practice by linking governance theory with actionable reforms in education systems. His current research focuses on strengthening Malawi's TVET quality assurance system through a governance-based framework aligned with Malawi Vision 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

# ACCREDITATION SYSTEMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAWI: LESSONS FROM REGIONAL AND GLOBAL MODELS

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma



## ABSTRACT

This study examined accreditation and quality assurance systems in higher education in Malawi, situating them within regional and global contexts. It found that while Malawi, through the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), had developed minimum standards and established the Malawi Qualifications Framework (MAQF), significant challenges persisted. These included resource constraints, limited institutional capacity, disparities in implementation between public and private institutions, and the need for stronger harmonization with international benchmarks.

Comparative analysis of regional models (South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Kenya) revealed more mature systems characterized by robust qualifications frameworks, structured accreditation cycles, external audits, and innovations such as digitization. Global models, including the Bologna Process in Europe, CHEA and regional accrediting bodies in North America, and the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework in Asia, underscored the importance of harmonization, independence of accrediting agencies, and regional cooperation.

The study concluded that Malawi must strengthen its accreditation system by adopting best practices from regional and global peers. Recommendations included ensuring equity in accreditation implementation, enhancing monitoring and enforcement capacity, digitizing accreditation processes, expanding frameworks to cover lifelong learning, and deepening alignment with SADC and AU initiatives. Policy implications emphasized legislative refinement, institutional capacity-building, and stakeholder collaboration. Future research was suggested on the impact of accreditation reforms on graduate

employability, equity in implementation, and the role of digital technologies in streamlining accreditation.

By addressing these gaps, Malawi's higher education institutions could enhance credibility, sustainability, and competitiveness, thereby contributing more effectively to national socio-economic development.

**Key Words:** Accreditation; Quality Assurance; Higher Education; Malawi; SADC; African Union; Bologna Process; CHEA; ASEAN Quality Assurance; Qualifications Framework; Institutional Capacity; Policy Reform; Equity in Implementation.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / POLICY BRIEF**

### **1.1 Background:**

Malawi established the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and the Malawi Qualifications Framework (MAQF) to regulate and accredit higher education institutions. Despite these advances, the study found persistent challenges in implementation, including resource constraints, institutional capacity limitations, and disparities between public and private institutions.

### **1.2 Regional and Global Insights:**

1.2.1 Regional Models (South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Kenya): Demonstrated stronger accreditation cycles, external audits, comprehensive qualifications frameworks, and innovations such as digitization.

1.2.2 Global Models (Europe, North America, Asia): Highlighted harmonization (Bologna Process), independence of accrediting agencies (CHEA), and regional cooperation (ASEAN QA Framework).

### **1.3 Key Findings:**

1.3.1 Malawi's accreditation system is foundational but unevenly applied, particularly disadvantaging private institutions.

1.3.2 Monitoring and enforcement mechanisms remain limited.

1.3.3 Alignment with regional and global standards is partial, constraining international recognition of qualifications.

## 1.4 Recommendations:

- 1.4.1 **Policy Reform:** Harmonize accreditation requirements across public and private institutions; refine NCHE legislation to ensure equity.
- 1.4.2. **Capacity Building:** Expand training for accreditation assessors, strengthen governance structures, and invest in ICT infrastructure.
- 1.4.3. **Digitization:** Introduce digital accreditation platforms to streamline processes and enhance transparency.
- 1.4.4. **Regional Integration:** Deepen alignment with SADC and AU frameworks to promote mobility and comparability of qualifications.
- 1.4.5. **Global Competitiveness:** Adopt best practices from Bologna, CHEA, and ASEAN QA frameworks to enhance credibility and recognition.

## 1.5 Policy Implications:

Accreditation must be positioned as a driver of socio-economic development, linked to national strategies such as the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS). Strengthening accreditation will ensure that graduates are competitive regionally and globally, contributing to Malawi's development agenda.

## 1.6 Future Research:

Further studies should assess the impact of accreditation reforms on graduate employability, equity in implementation, and the role of digital technologies in quality assurance.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a distinguished scholar and practitioner in higher education quality assurance and accreditation. He was part of the team that developed the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (2015) and the Malawi Qualifications Framework (2019), and has authored a Curriculum Framework for postgraduate students in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry. His scholarship spans 26 journal publications across diverse areas of the education sector, including TVET reform (8 papers), higher education governance (6 papers, including a Manual on Research Methodology and PDQA-HEI), teacher development (2 papers), basic education (3 papers), secondary education (3 papers), early childhood development (4 papers), and cross-cutting themes (1 paper).

Among his notable works is *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi*, which reflects his commitment to inclusive and equitable education. Dr. Msukuma's contributions demonstrate a strategic blend of policy development, research, and practical frameworks that continue to strengthen accreditation systems and enhance the credibility of higher education in Malawi and the wider region. His work has positioned him as a leading voice in advancing reforms that ensure higher education institutions produce graduates who are globally competitive and responsive to national development needs.

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# Basic Education under Local Government in Malawi:

*A Theoretical Analysis*



**Zizwa Msukuma, PhD**

## ABSTRACT

This study critically examined the decentralization of basic education in Malawi, focusing on governance structures, equity, quality assurance, and policy coherence. Historically, primary education was managed under the Ministry of Education, but responsibility was later transferred to the Ministry of Local Government through the Local Government Act (1998) and the Decentralization Policy (2008). While this reform was intended to enhance community participation and accountability, its implementation generated complex challenges.

Adopting a theoretical and conceptual approach, the study relied on secondary sources, including policy documents, scholarly literature, and comparative experiences from Southern Africa and beyond. The analysis was guided by decentralization theory, governance theory, and education policy frameworks, enabling a critical interrogation of both the rationale and outcomes of decentralization.

Findings revealed that decentralization produced fragmented governance, weak quality assurance mechanisms, and persistent inequalities in resource distribution, particularly disadvantaging rural schools and girls. Local councils lack the capacity to manage education effectively, resulting in reliance on central ministry interventions.

The study contributed to education policy discourse by highlighting the gap between theoretical expectations and practical realities. Recommendations included re-centralizing critical functions such as teacher management, strengthening local council capacity, clarifying mandates, and ensuring equitable resource allocation. Future research should employ empirical and comparative approaches to assess the long-term impact of decentralization on learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Decentralization of Education; Governance Theory; Education Policy Frameworks; Local Government Capacity; Quality Assurance in Basic Education; Equity and Inclusion; Malawi Education Reform

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study critically examined the decentralization of basic education in Malawi, focusing on governance structures, quality assurance, equity, capacity, and policy coherence. Decentralization was introduced through the Local Government Act (1998) and the Decentralization Policy (2008), transferring responsibility for primary education from the Ministry of Education to local councils. While the reform was intended to enhance accountability, efficiency, and community participation, its implementation revealed significant challenges.

A theoretical and conceptual methodology was employed, drawing on decentralization theory, governance theory, and education policy frameworks. The analysis relied on secondary sources, including policy documents, scholarly literature, and comparative experiences from Southern Africa and beyond.

The findings demonstrated that decentralization produced fragmented governance, dual reporting structures, weak quality assurance mechanisms, and persistent inequalities in resource distribution. Local councils lack the capacity and leadership to manage education effectively, resulting in reliance on central ministry interventions. Gender disparities and rural disadvantage are particularly pronounced, undermining the goals of equity and inclusion.

The study contributed to education policy discourse by highlighting the gap between theoretical expectations and practical realities. It recommended re-centralizing critical functions such as teacher management and infrastructure development under the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, while simultaneously strengthening local council capacity, clarifying mandates, and ensuring equitable resource allocation.

Future research should employ empirical studies to measure the impact of decentralization on learning outcomes and comparative analyses to identify best practices across Africa. By addressing these gaps, Malawi can better align education governance with Vision 2063 and international commitments to SDG 4.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a distinguished education policy expert, researcher, and prolific author with extensive experience in curriculum reform, qualifications frameworks, and strategic programme design across Southern Africa. He played a leading role in the development of the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (2015) and the Malawi Qualifications Framework (2019), and has authored influential works on education reform, quality assurance, and professional development.


Dr. Msukuma has designed postgraduate programmes, including the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry, demonstrating his commitment to advancing quality assurance regimes. His scholarly portfolio includes publications such as *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi*, which reflect his focus on inclusive development and systemic reform.

Currently, Dr. Msukuma is spearheading the integration of cross-sectoral quality assurance and leadership frameworks in Malawi's education system, with a strong emphasis on examiner-friendly presentation, methodological transparency, and stakeholder engagement. His research interests span governance theory, decentralization, and education policy integration, and his long-term vision is to transform Malawi's education system by embedding coherent, inclusive, and future-oriented frameworks that align with national priorities and global development goals.



# Capacity Building for Quality Assurance in TVET Institutions

Leadership, Staff Development,  
and Resource Mobilization



Dr Zizwa  
Msukuma

*(Assessment &  
Education Quality  
Assurance Specialist)*

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 Purpose

This study assessed the capacity of Malawi's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions to implement effective Quality Assurance (QA) systems, using a mixed-methods approach.

### 1.2 Key Findings

**1.2.1 Institutional Gaps:** Most institutions lack dedicated QA Units → fragmented accountability and weak policy implementation.

**1.2.2 Leadership Challenges:** Leadership is reactive, focused on short-term operational issues → limited vision and staff engagement.

#### 1.2.3 Human Capital Deficits:

1.2.3.1 Professional development opportunities are scarce.

1.2.3.3 Vacancy rates are high: only 45% of positions filled in public TVET institutions.

**1.2.4 Resource Constraints:** Heavy reliance on government subventions and tuition fees → QA initiatives remain vulnerable and unsustainable.

#### 1.2.5 Strategic Insights (Theoretical Lens)

**1.2.5.1 Capacity Building:** Institutions need empowered QA Units and clear accountability structures.

**1.2.5.2 Transformational Leadership:** Leaders must inspire, engage, and drive long-term quality culture.

**1.2.5.3 Human Capital:** Investment in staff qualifications and development is critical for graduate employability.

**1.2.5.4 Resource Dependence:** Diversification of funding and partnerships is essential to reduce vulnerability.

## **1.2.6 Recommendations**

### **1.2.6.1 Policy Level:**

- a) Mandate QA Units in all TVET institutions.
- b) Increase and diversify funding (PPP, donor, industry).
- c) Fill staffing gaps and incentivize retention.
- d) Centralize education and training under the Ministry of Education, consistent with SADC member states.

### **1.2.6.2 Institutional Level:**

- a) Establish QA Units with clear mandates.
- b) Adopt strategic, participatory leadership practices.
- c) Embed QA into curriculum, assessment, and staff evaluation.
- d) Develop partnerships to diversify resources.

### **1.2.6.3 Staff Level:**

- a) Expand continuous professional development.
- b) Incentivize qualification upgrading.
- c) Engage staff in QA processes to foster ownership.
- d) Address staffing shortages and workload management.

## **1.2.7 National and Regional Relevance**

**1.2.7.1 Aligns with Malawi Vision 2063:** human capital development, innovation, and industrialization.

**1.2.7.2 Resonates with SADC frameworks:** harmonized QA standards, regional competitiveness, and mobility of skilled labour.

### **1.2.8 Contribution to Knowledge**

This study provides new empirical evidence on QA in Malawi's TVET sector, applies multidimensional theoretical frameworks, and offers actionable strategies for reform. It advances scholarship and practice by linking institutional realities to national priorities and regional harmonization.

## ABSTRACT

This study investigated Quality Assurance (QA) capacity in Malawi's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions using a mixed-methods approach that integrated quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and document analysis. The findings revealed systemic challenges in institutional empowerment, leadership practices, staff qualifications, and resource mobilization. Quantitative data highlighted inadequate funding, high vacancy rates—with only 45% of positions filled in public TVET institutions—and limited adoption of QA policies. Qualitative insights contextualized these gaps, pointing to reactive leadership, insufficient professional development opportunities, and heavy reliance on government subventions and tuition fees.

The study applied four theoretical frameworks—Capacity Building, Transformational Leadership, Human Capital, and Resource Dependence—to interpret the findings. Capacity Building Theory illuminated the absence of dedicated QA Units and fragmented accountability structures. Transformational Leadership Theory explained the reactive nature of leadership and the need for visionary, participatory approaches. Human Capital Theory underscored the critical role of investing in staff qualifications and development to improve instructional quality and graduate employability. Resource Dependence Theory contextualized the funding constraints and reliance on external resources, highlighting the need for diversification strategies.

The study concludes that strengthening QA capacity in Malawi's TVET institutions requires a holistic approach that simultaneously addresses leadership empowerment, staff development, and resource mobilization. It recommends policy-level reforms to mandate QA Units, fill staffing gaps,

and diversify funding; institutional strategies to embed QA in organizational culture; and staff-level interventions to expand professional development and qualification upgrading. Importantly, the study emphasizes that education and training are the mandate of the Ministry of Education, and therefore all QA reforms must be centrally coordinated under this ministry, consistent with governance structures across SADC member states.

This paper contributes to knowledge by providing new empirical evidence on QA capacity in Malawi's TVET sector, applying multidimensional theoretical frameworks to interpret systemic challenges, and offering actionable recommendations aligned with national development priorities (Vision 2063) and regional harmonization standards (SADC).

## Author's Bio

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in curriculum innovation, quality assurance, and sectoral reform. He holds a PhD in Assessment and Education Quality Assurance from the University of Pretoria. Over the course of his career, Dr. Msukuma has designed and led multi-institutional programmes, embedding national identity, ethical values, and lifelong learning principles into curriculum frameworks. His work emphasizes operational clarity, outcome sequencing, and stakeholder engagement, often using visual matrices and comparative frameworks to strengthen both academic and policy outputs.

Dr. Msukuma's scholarship is deeply rooted in Malawi's national development priorities and regional frameworks such as **Malawi 2063**, **SADC standards**, and **UNESCO guidelines**. He has published conceptual models and policy analyses linking governance shifts, funding strategies, and QA capacity to institutional resilience and transformation. His long-term vision is to advance education reform in Malawi and Southern Africa by empowering graduates to become independent thinkers, responsible leaders, and lifelong learners who drive sectoral transformation.

# LEARNING FROM ZAMBIA:

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES IN MALAWI AND ZAMBIA



BY



**DR ZIZWA MSUKUMA**  
(Assessment and Quality  
Assurance Specialist)



(C)2025

## ABSTRACT

This study examined governance structures for Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Malawi and Zambia, conducted in October 2025. Using a comparative case study design, the research analyzed institutional arrangements, policy frameworks, funding mechanisms, and quality assurance systems in both countries. Data were drawn from national policies, legislative frameworks, curriculum documents, and regional and global commitments, including AU Agenda 2063, SADC education frameworks, UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4.2, and Malawi 2063.

Findings revealed that Malawi's governance was fragmented, with responsibilities spread across multiple ministries and service delivery heavily reliant on Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs) managed by volunteers. This model reflected strong community engagement but suffered from underfunding, weak monitoring, and inconsistent quality standards. In contrast, Zambia's governance was centralized under the Ministry of Education, supported by the Directorate of Early Childhood Education (DoECE), provincial officers, and a clear legal framework through the Education Act of 2011. This arrangement provided stronger accountability, more robust monitoring, and higher enrolment rates.

The comparative analysis demonstrated that Zambia's institutionalized governance aligned more closely with global and regional frameworks, while Malawi's policy vision lacked effective implementation mechanisms. The study concluded that governance structures were critical determinants of equity, quality, and sustainability in ECD provision.

Policy recommendations are as follows: Malawi should:

- a) strengthen institutional integration under a single lead ministry,
- b) increase government funding,
- c) establish standardized curriculum frameworks,
- d) enhance quality assurance mechanisms,
- e) leverage community engagement, and
- f) align more closely with regional and global frameworks.

By adopting these measures, Malawi positions itself to improve ECD governance, advance equity and quality of services, and achieve its national development goals under Malawi 2063.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Development, Governance, Malawi, Zambia, Comparative Analysis, Policy Reform

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1 Purpose of the Study**

This study, conducted in October 2025, compared governance structures for Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Malawi and Zambia. The aim was to understand how institutional arrangements, policies, funding, and quality assurance systems shaped outcomes, and to identify lessons Malawi could draw from Zambia's experience.

### **1.2 Key Findings**

#### **1.2.1 Malawi's Governance Structure:**

- a) ECD is coordinated across multiple ministries, with the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare holding the primary mandate.
- b) Service delivery rely heavily on Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs), managed by volunteers and supported by NGOs and faith-based organizations.
- c) Funding is minimal, with government allocations accounting for less than 1% of the education budget, leaving services dependent on donor support.
- d) Monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms are weak, resulting in uneven standards and limited accountability.

#### **1.2.2 Zambia's Governance Structure:**

- a) Early Childhood Education (ECE) is centralized under the Ministry of Education, with the Directorate of Early Childhood Education (DoECE) established in 2015.
- b) The Education Act of 2011 provides a clear legal framework, mandating regulation and accountability for ECE services.
- c) A standardized Curriculum Framework (2013) ensure developmental appropriateness and cultural relevance, promoting play-based learning.
- d) Funding is more substantial, with government allocations complemented by donor support.

- e) Provincial and district officers monitor implementation, resulting in stronger quality assurance and higher enrolment rates.

### **1.2.3 Comparative Insights:**

- a) Malawi's system reflects strong community engagement but lack institutional coherence and sustainable funding.
- b) Zambia's centralized governance provides clearer accountability, stronger monitoring, and better alignment with global and regional frameworks such as AU Agenda 2063, SADC commitments, and UNESCO's SDG 4.2.
- c) Both countries value parental and community involvement, but Zambia integrate these within a regulated system, while Malawi rely on them as the primary delivery mechanism.

## **1.3 Policy Recommendations for Malawi**

- 1.3.1. **Strengthen Institutional Integration:** Designate a single lead ministry with clear authority for ECD governance.
- 1.3.2. **Increase Government Funding:** Allocate a larger share of the education budget to ECD to reduce reliance on donors.
- 1.3.3. **Standardize Curriculum Frameworks:** Develop and enforce national curriculum standards for CBCCs to ensure consistency and developmental appropriateness.
- 1.3.4. **Enhance Quality Assurance:** Establish stronger monitoring and regulation through inspectorates and district-level officers.
- 1.3.5. **Leverage Community Engagement:** Preserve Malawi's tradition of community involvement but integrate it into a formal governance framework.
- 1.3.6. **Align with Regional and Global Frameworks:** Harmonize national policies with AU Agenda 2063, SADC commitments, and UNESCO standards to ensure coherence and competitiveness.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

Governance structures are critical determinants of equity, quality, and sustainability in ECD provision. Malawi has an opportunity to learn from

Zambia's centralized model while retaining its community-driven strengths. By implementing these recommendations, Malawi can strengthen its ECD governance, improve service delivery, and advance its national development goals under Malawi 2063.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in curriculum innovation, sectoral reform, and quality assurance in higher and basic education. He holds a PhD in Assessment and Education Quality Assurance from the University of Pretoria. Dr. Msukuma has designed and led multi-institutional programs across Malawi and Southern Africa, with a focus on embedding national identity, ethical values, and lifelong learning principles into education systems. His expertise lies in outcome framing, policy analysis, and the integration of governance frameworks with practical curriculum design.

He has published widely on education governance and quality assurance, contributing to both scholarly and policy-oriented discourse. His recent paper, *Monitoring Learning Outcomes in ECD Centres in Malawi: Developing QA Tools for ECD Centres*, explored innovative approaches to assessing early childhood learning outcomes and strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in community-based childcare settings. Dr. Msukuma continues to advance education reform through scholarly publications, stakeholder engagement, and strategic portfolio design aligned with Malawi 2063, SADC, AU, and UNESCO frameworks.



# **Equity and Quality in Basic Education:**

Assessing Quality Assurance  
Systems for Gender and  
Rural Inclusion in Malawi

**Dr. Zizwa Msukuma**

Assessment & Education Quality Assurance Specialist



## **ABSTRACT**

### **Background**

Quality assurance (QA) systems are central to advancing inclusive and equitable education. In Malawi, persistent gender disparities and rural inequities challenge the effectiveness of QA in basic education.

### **Methods**

The study employs a mixed-methods design, integrating policy analysis, stakeholder interviews, and survey data from rural schools. It is guided by global frameworks (SDG 4), regional commitments (CESA 16–25), and national priorities (Malawi 2063; NESIP 2020–2030).

### **Findings**

QA mechanisms exist but remain fragmented and inconsistently applied. Gender-focused initiatives improve enrolment, yet retention and completion outcomes remain uneven, particularly for rural girls. Infrastructure and resource deficits persist, while QA monitoring rarely incorporates equity-sensitive indicators.

### **Contribution**

The study situates Malawi's QA practices within global and regional contexts, highlighting gaps in embedding equity into QA frameworks. It demonstrates that sustainable reform requires QA systems that integrate gender and rural priorities to ensure improvements in teaching, learning, and accountability translate into equitable outcomes.

### **Policy Implications**

Recommendations emphasize strengthening QA governance through District Councils, adopting gender-sensitive metrics, investing in rural

infrastructure, and piloting equity-focused monitoring tools. These reforms are critical for aligning Malawi's basic education with national development aspirations and global commitments to inclusive, quality education.

**Keywords:**

Quality Assurance; Equity in Education; Gender Equity; Rural Inclusion; Basic Education; District Councils; Malawi 2063; NESIP 2020–2030; CESA 16–25; SDG 4

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **STRENGTHENING QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR EQUITY IN BASIC EDUCATION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Basic education in Malawi is now administered through District Councils under the Ministry of Local Government, making local governance central to education reform. This study highlights the urgent need to integrate quality assurance (QA) systems, gender equity, and rural inclusion into a unified framework that drives equitable and high-quality learning outcomes.

#### **1.2 Key Insights**

- 1.2.1 QA systems exist but remain fragmented and inconsistently applied.
- 1.2.2 Gender-focused initiatives improve enrolment but retention and completion rates remain uneven, especially for girls in rural areas.
- 1.2.3 Rural schools continue to face infrastructure gaps, limited teacher deployment, and inequitable resource allocation.
- 1.2.4 Equity priorities are not consistently embedded in QA frameworks, limiting their effectiveness.

#### **1.3 Recommendations for District Councils**

- 1.3.1 Strengthen QA systems by standardizing benchmarks, training QA officers, and digitizing monitoring.

- 1.3.2 Advance gender equity through gender-sensitive QA indicators, community campaigns, and recruitment of female educators.
- 1.3.3 Enhance rural inclusion by investing in infrastructure, incentivizing rural teacher placement, and deploying mobile QA units.
- 1.3.4 Embed equity into QA frameworks by revising instruments, expanding district audits, and piloting equity-focused monitoring tools.

#### **1.4 Strategic Alignment**

These reforms align with Malawi 2063, the NESIP 2020–2030, the AU’s CESA 16–25, and SDG 4, ensuring that Malawi’s basic education system delivers inclusive, accountable, and high-quality outcomes.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in curriculum innovation, quality assurance, and sectoral reform. He earned his PhD in Assessment and Education Quality Assurance from the University of Pretoria. His work has focused on designing and leading multi-institutional programmes that embed national identity, ethical values, and lifelong learning principles into education systems.

Dr. Msukuma has published widely on education governance, curriculum design, and quality assurance, and has contributed to policy dialogues linking Malawi's education reforms to regional and global frameworks such as Malawi 2063, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4. His expertise lies in outcome framing across knowledge, affective, psychomotor, and communication domains, as well as in operational clarity through visual matrices, tables, and diagrams that enhance stakeholder engagement.

As an Educationist and Policy Reform Specialist, Dr. Msukuma is committed to advancing education reform in Malawi and Southern Africa by empowering graduates to become independent thinkers, responsible leaders, and lifelong learners. His scholarship bridges academic rigor with practical relevance, ensuring that reforms resonate nationally while contributing to global debates on equity and quality in education.

# GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

## BRIDGING POLICY AND PRACTICE IN MALAWI

**DR ZIZWA MSUKUMA**  
(ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY  
ASSURANCE SPECIALIST)



(C2026)

## ABSTRACT

This study examined governance structures and quality assurance (QA) mechanisms in Malawi's higher education sector, situating them within national, regional, and global contexts. Using a mixed-methods design, the research combined policy analysis, institutional reports, interviews, and surveys to generate a holistic understanding of how governance and QA frameworks operate in practice.

Findings revealed that governance structures are marked by uneven autonomy, selective application of accreditation procedures, and limited stakeholder participation. While the establishment of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) represented a milestone in institutionalizing QA, resource constraints and policy-practice gaps undermine its effectiveness. Quality assurance mechanisms—curriculum review, accreditation, and monitoring—were formally established but inconsistently implemented, with public institutions benefiting from regulatory flexibility compared to private universities.

Despite these challenges, successes included the creation of internal QA units, the rollout of innovative programs responsive to labor market demands, and Malawi's engagement with regional and continental frameworks such as the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF) and the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA). However, tensions between policy intent and institutional realities persist, with implications for equity, access, and quality.

The study concludes that strengthening NCHE's capacity, harmonizing accreditation procedures, and embedding participatory governance are critical for advancing equity and safeguarding quality. By consolidating gains and addressing systemic weaknesses, Malawi's higher education sector can position itself as a driver of national development, social inclusion, and global competitiveness.

**Keywords:** Higher Education Governance; Quality Assurance (QA); National Council for Higher Education (NCHE); Accreditation and Curriculum Review; Equity and Access in Education; Malawi Higher Education; Regional and Global Alignment (ASG-QA, SADCQF).



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / POLICY BRIEF

### 1.1 Context

Malawi's higher education sector has undergone significant transformation, marked by the establishment of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) in 2011 and the adoption of national strategies such as the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) and the Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP). These frameworks aimed to expand access, improve equity, and institutionalize quality assurance (QA).

### 1.2 Key Findings

**1.2.1 Governance Structures:** Autonomy is unevenly applied, with public universities enjoying greater flexibility than private institutions. Accountability mechanisms exist but are inconsistently enforced, and stakeholder participation remains limited.

**1.2.2 Quality Assurance Implementation:** QA processes—curriculum review, accreditation, and monitoring—are formally established but unevenly operationalized. Public institutions demonstrate stronger compliance, while private universities face stricter requirements and delays.

**1.2.3 Successes:** Establishment of NCHE, creation of internal QA units, rollout of innovative programs responsive to labor market needs, and engagement with regional/global frameworks (SADCQF, ASG-QA, HAQAA).

**1.2.4 Challenges:** Resource constraints, policy-practice gaps, inequitable accreditation procedures, and weak stakeholder engagement undermine effectiveness.

### 1.3 Policy Implications

**1.3.1 Equity:** Selective accreditation procedures disadvantage private institutions and limit opportunities for students, particularly women and rural populations.

**1.3.2 Access:** Expansion is constrained by infrastructure gaps, financial barriers, and uneven accreditation processes.

**1.3.3 Quality:** Sporadic monitoring and limited curriculum review weaken credibility and responsiveness to labour market demands.

## **1.4 Recommendations**

- 1.4.1 Strengthen NCHE's Capacity – Increase resources and staff training to enable consistent monitoring and enforcement.
- 1.4.2. Ensure Equity in Accreditation – Harmonize requirements across public and private institutions with transparent timelines.
- 1.4.3. Enhance Stakeholder Participation – Institutionalize student and faculty involvement in QA processes.
- 1.4.4. Expand Access and Inclusivity – Support program diversification, especially in STEM, and implement targeted measures for gender and rural equity.
- 1.4.5. Improve Curriculum Responsiveness – Standardize review processes and integrate industry input.
- 1.4.6. Deepen Regional and Global Alignment – Accelerate integration with SADCQF and continue engagement with ASG-QA and HAQAA.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Malawi's higher education sector stands at a pivotal moment. By consolidating gains, addressing systemic weaknesses, and embedding equity and inclusivity, the sector can transform into a driver of national development and global competitiveness. Governance and QA reforms are not ends in themselves but instruments for building a resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking higher education system.

## AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in governance reform, curriculum innovation, and quality assurance in higher education. He has played a leading role in designing and implementing multi-institutional programmes that align academic outcomes with national development priorities.

Dr. Msukuma is the architect of the Curriculum Framework for the **Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry**, a pioneering initiative that integrates academic rigor with industry relevance. He was also part of the technical teams that developed the **Lesotho Qualifications Framework (LQF) in 2015** and the **Malawi Qualifications Framework (MAQF) in 2019**, demonstrating his regional expertise in qualifications harmonization and policy alignment.

He has published widely on education governance and quality assurance, including the paper **“Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi”**, which examines systemic challenges and opportunities for inclusive QA frameworks. His scholarship consistently bridges theory and practice, offering actionable insights for policymakers, institutions, and regional bodies.

Beyond curriculum design and scholarly publication, Dr. Msukuma is recognized for his expertise in **comparative policy analysis, outcome framing, and stakeholder engagement**. He has contributed to regional dialogues on harmonization of qualifications and alignment with continental frameworks such as the **African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA)** and the **SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF)**.

His current work focuses on sequencing reform initiatives across basic, secondary, and higher education subsectors, ensuring clarity, impact, and national resonance. Through his scholarship and strategic leadership, Dr. Msukuma continues to shape Malawi's higher education landscape, advancing equity, access, and quality in alignment with global standards.

**INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS  
AND QUALITY ASSURANCE:  
STRENGTHENING RELEVANCE  
OF TVET CURRICULA TO  
LABOUR MARKET NEEDS  
IN MALAWI**

**By Dr Zizwa Msukuma  
Assessment and Quality Assurance  
Specialist**



(C2026)

## ABSTRACT

This study examined the relevance of Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) curricula in Malawi, focusing on industry partnerships and quality assurance (QA) as strategic levers for reform. Guided by Human Capital Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and Systems Theory, the research employed a qualitative design combining policy analysis, document review, and stakeholder consultations. Data sources included government policies, QA frameworks, industry reports, and the Malawi Labour Market Survey.

Findings revealed that industry partnerships are weakly structured and inconsistently applied across sectors, limiting employer involvement in curriculum design, delivery, and assessment. Quality assurance frameworks, though well-articulated in legislation and national standards, are under-resourced and poorly implemented, undermining credibility and accountability. Curricula remain largely static, failing to integrate employability skills or respond adequately to emerging labour market demands in ICT, agribusiness, renewable energy, and construction.

The study concluded that institutionalizing industry partnerships and strengthening QA mechanisms are essential for aligning TVET outcomes with labour market needs and national development priorities under Malawi 2063.

Recommendations included formalizing employer engagement, expanding industrial attachment programmes, embedding labour market data into QA processes, and promoting public–private partnerships to co-invest in training infrastructure.

By situating Malawi's challenges within global and regional literature, the study has demonstrated that industry partnerships and QA are not optional add-ons but strategic imperatives for transforming TVET systems. Strengthening these levers will ensure that Malawi produces graduates with relevant skills, enhances employability, and contributes to inclusive economic growth.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.0 Strengthening Industry Partnerships and Quality Assurance in Malawi's TVET System: Aligning Skills Development with Labour Market Needs and Malawi 2063 Goals**

#### **1.1 Background**

Malawi's Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) system is central to preparing youth for employment and driving inclusive growth. Yet, persistent challenges—weak industry engagement, underperforming quality assurance (QA), and static curricula—limit its effectiveness. These gaps undermine the country's aspirations under Malawi 2063, which identifies human capital development as a key enabler of transformation.

#### **1.2 Key Findings**

##### **1.2.1 Industry Partnerships**

- a) Employer involvement in curriculum design and delivery was limited and informal.
- b) Industrial attachment programmes were constrained by few firms hosting trainees.
- c) Sectoral variation: ICT and agribusiness showed stronger collaboration; construction and manufacturing lagged.

##### **1.2.2 Assurance Mechanisms**

- a) QA frameworks were well-structured in principle, anchored in legislation and standards.
- b) Implementation was weak due to resource constraints and fragmented governance.

- c) Employers questioned the credibility of TVET qualifications.

### **1.2.3 Curriculum–Labour Market Alignment**

- a) Curricula remained static, failing to integrate employability skills (communication, teamwork, adaptability).
- b) Emerging sectors (ICT, renewable energy, agribusiness) lacked systematic curriculum integration.
- c) Employers consistently reported dissatisfaction with graduate readiness.

## **1.3 Strategic Implications**

**1.3.1 Human Capital Theory:** Relevant skills are essential for productivity and growth.

**1.3.2 Stakeholder Theory:** Balanced engagement among employers, institutions, and policymakers is missing.

**1.3.3 Systems Theory:** QA feedback loops are weak, undermining alignment between training inputs and labour market outputs.

## **1.4 Recommendations**

### **1.4.1 Policy-Level**

- a) Institutionalize employer participation in curriculum and QA processes.
- b) Align TVET reforms explicitly with Malawi 2063 human capital goals.
- c) Mobilize resources for QA and industry engagement through government, donor, and private sector support.

### **1.4.2 Institutional-Level**

- a) Establish sectoral advisory boards to guide curriculum reform.

- b) Strengthen accreditation, monitoring, and evaluation processes.
- c) Build capacity for QA staff and curriculum developers.

### **1.4.3 Industry-Level**

- a) Incentivize firms to host trainees and participate in curriculum committees.
- b) Embed employers directly into QA processes to enhance credibility.
- c) Promote public–private partnerships (PPPs) for training infrastructure and innovation hubs.

### **1.4.4 Cross-Cutting**

- a) Integrate labour market data systematically into curriculum and QA processes.
- b) Prioritize employability skills as core curriculum components.
- c) Expand opportunities for rural and marginalized groups to access industry-linked training.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Strengthening industry partnerships and QA mechanisms is not optional but strategic. Institutionalizing these levers will ensure that Malawi's TVET system produces graduates with relevant skills, enhances employability, and contributes directly to the inclusive economic transformation envisioned in Malawi 2063.

## AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in curriculum innovation, sectoral reform, and quality assurance in higher and technical education. He has designed and led multi-institutional programmes that integrate national policy priorities with practical outcomes, ensuring clarity, impact, and resonance across the education sector.

Dr. Msukuma's expertise lies in outcome framing across knowledge, affective, psychomotor, and communication domains, as well as in operational excellence in curriculum and manuscript design. He is recognized for his ability to embed ethical values, national identity, and lifelong learning principles into programme outcomes. His scholarly work combines rigorous policy analysis with visually compelling frameworks, making complex reforms accessible to diverse stakeholders.

Beyond scholarship, Dr. Msukuma has also developed a Curriculum Framework for postgraduate students: the "*Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry*". This innovation demonstrates his commitment and authority in the quality assurance regime, further solidifying his role as a thought leader in education governance and reform.

He has published widely on education governance, curriculum relevance, and quality assurance, including the portfolio addition Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi. His academic writing is distinguished by meticulous structuring, narrative integration, and strategic alignment with national development frameworks such as Malawi 2063.

Dr. Msukuma remains deeply committed to empowering the next generation of Malawian educators and learners. He champions collaborative drafting, iterative refinement, and stakeholder engagement as pathways to sustainable transformation in education.

# LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE IN MALAWI'S SECONDARY SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION

**Dr Zizwa Msukuma**

Assessment and Quality Assurance Specialist



## ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of leadership and governance in the implementation of quality assurance (QA) frameworks within Malawi's secondary schools. Despite national efforts to expand access to education, persistent challenges in leadership capacity, governance structures, and resource allocation have hindered the effective delivery of quality education. Using a mixed-methods design, the research collected data from head teachers, teachers, school boards, district education managers, and policymakers through interviews, surveys, and document analysis.

Findings revealed that leadership practices are predominantly managerial, with limited evidence of transformational approaches that inspire and empower staff. Governance structures, though formally established, are inconsistently applied, resulting in fragmented accountability and weak stakeholder participation.

Key challenges included resource constraints, policy gaps, and inadequate training for school leaders. Case examples highlighted that schools with proactive leadership and active governance bodies demonstrate stronger alignment with QA standards and improved educational outcomes. The study concluded that leadership and governance are foundational to QA implementation, and recommended policy reforms, capacity-building initiatives, and systemic changes to strengthen accountability and sustainability. These insights contribute to the broader discourse on educational leadership and governance in Sub-Saharan Africa, while offering evidence-based recommendations for enhancing quality assurance in Malawi's secondary schools.

Keywords: Leadership in education; Governance structures; Quality assurance (QA); Secondary schools; Malawi education system;

Transformational leadership; Educational policy and reform; Stakeholder participation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / POLICY BRIEF

### Leadership and Governance in Malawi's Secondary Schools: Implications for Quality Assurance Implementation

#### 1.1 Background

Secondary education in Malawi plays a pivotal role in national development, yet persistent challenges in leadership and governance undermine the effective implementation of quality assurance (QA) frameworks. While policies exist to regulate standards, their translation into practice remains inconsistent, particularly in resource-constrained schools.

#### 1.2 Study Overview

1.2.1 Design: Mixed-methods (interviews, surveys, document analysis)

1.2.2 Participants: Head teachers, teachers, school boards, district managers, policymakers

1.2.3 Focus: Role of leadership and governance in QA implementation

#### 1.3 Key Findings

1.3.1 Leadership practices are managerial, not transformational.

1.3.2 Governance structures exist but are inconsistently applied.

1.3.3 Resource constraints and policy gaps limit QA delivery.

1.3.4 Schools with proactive leadership + active governance show stronger QA alignment and better outcomes.

#### 1.4 Implications

1.4.1 QA risks remaining aspirational without strong leadership.

1.4.2 Weak governance undermines accountability and stakeholder participation.

1.4.3 Equity gaps persist, especially in rural schools.

#### 1.5 Policy Priorities

**1.5.1. Capacity Building:** Train school leaders in QA and transformational leadership.

- 1.5.2. **Governance Reform:** Clarify mandates, enforce accountability, monitor performance.
- 1.5.3. **Resource Mobilization:** Prioritize underserved schools for infrastructure, ICT, and teacher deployment.
- 1.5.4. **Policy Alignment:** Translate QA frameworks into actionable school-level guidelines.
- 1.5.5. **Equity Integration:** Embed gender and rural inclusion indicators in QA monitoring.
- 1.5.6. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Strengthen collaboration among government, communities, and private sector.

## 1.6 Conclusion

Leadership and governance are foundational to QA implementation. Policy reforms, capacity building, and systemic accountability can transform QA from rhetoric into classroom reality, ensuring equitable, high-quality education that advances Malawi's national development goals.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in curriculum innovation, quality assurance, and sectoral reform. He has designed and led multi-institutional programmes that integrate national policy priorities with practical outcomes for higher education and industry. Dr. Msukuma is the architect of the Curriculum Framework for the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry, a pioneering initiative that demonstrates his commitment to strengthening Malawi's quality assurance regime.

His scholarly contributions include publications such as *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi*, which highlight his dedication to embedding inclusivity and national identity in education reform. He is widely recognized for his expertise in outcome framing, curriculum design, and policy analysis, as well as his ability to translate complex governance and quality assurance concepts into actionable strategies.

Beyond academic writing, Dr. Msukuma is known for his meticulous approach to portfolio presentation, employing sequencing, clustering, and visual identity techniques to ensure clarity and resonance with diverse stakeholders. His work consistently bridges scholarship, policy, and practice, positioning him as a leading voice in the transformation of Malawi's education sector.

# Monitoring Learning Outcomes in Early Childhood Development: Developing QA Tools for Malawi's ECD Centres

**By Dr Zizwa Msukuma**  
Assessment and Quality Assurance Specialist



## ABSTRACT

This study develops and validates a conceptual framework for monitoring learning outcomes in Malawi's Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres, integrating child development domains with quality assurance (QA) dimensions and aligning them with national, regional, and global policy priorities. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected through structured observations, developmental assessments, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis across diverse urban and rural centres. Findings reveal encouraging progress in cognitive, socio-emotional, psychomotor, and communication domains, but independence and lifelong learning dispositions remain underdeveloped. Equity indicators highlight persistent disparities: rural centres lag behind urban counterparts, girls outperform boys in socio-emotional outcomes, and children with disabilities face limited inclusion. QA analysis shows that inputs (resources, caregiver training) and processes (pedagogical practices, caregiver-child interactions) strongly shape outputs and outcomes, underscoring systemic gaps in resource distribution and professional capacity.

The study contributes to theory by validating the interdependence of child development domains and demonstrating the utility of QA dimensions for linking child-level outcomes to systemic accountability. Practically, it highlights the decisive role of caregiver training, resource provision, and inclusive practices. Policy-wise, it shows how QA tools can strengthen alignment with Malawi Vision 2063, the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESP 2020–2030), the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, and SDG 4.2. Limitations include reliance on purposive sampling and the need for longitudinal validation of QA tools. Future research

should refine disability-sensitive indicators, expand caregiver training models, and explore digital innovations for monitoring.

Overall, the study provides a robust foundation for institutionalizing QA tools in Malawi's ECD sector, ensuring that systematic monitoring of child-level outcomes contributes meaningfully to inclusive, equitable, and sustainable national development.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Development (ECD); Quality Assurance (QA); Learning Outcomes; Equity and Inclusion; Malawi 2063; Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 (SDG 4.2)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

### 1.0 Strengthening Quality Assurance in Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Malawi

#### 1.1 Background

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a cornerstone of Malawi's human capital development agenda, central to achieving Vision 2063, the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESP 2020–2030), and global commitments under SDG 4.2. Despite progress in expanding Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs), challenges in quality, equity, and inclusion persist.

#### 1.2 Key Findings

**1.2.1 Cognitive Development:** Children show progress in literacy and numeracy, but rural centres lag significantly behind urban centres due to limited teaching and learning materials.

**1.2.2 Socio-Emotional Development:** Encouraging outcomes in emotional regulation and peer interaction, with girls consistently outperforming boys. Rural centres face challenges due to overcrowding and limited caregiver training.

**1.2.3 Psychomotor Development:** Gross motor skills are strong across contexts, but fine motor skills remain weak, particularly in resource-constrained centres.

**1.2.4 Communication Skills:** Vocabulary and comprehension outcomes are uneven, with urban centres performing better due to multilingual resources and structured storytelling.

### 1.3 Quality Assurance (QA) Dimensions

**1.3.1 Inputs:** Inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and high caregiver-child ratios (average 69:1).

**1.3.2 Processes:** Strong outcomes in centres with structured play and trained caregivers; weak outcomes where rote methods dominate.

**1.3.3 Outputs:** Partial achievement of literacy and numeracy benchmarks; socio-emotional disparities persist.

**1.3.4 Outcomes:** Encouraging physical development, but weak independence and inclusion outcomes limit school readiness.

**1.3.5 Independence & Lifelong Learning:** The weakest domain, with low levels of responsibility and autonomy, highlighting the need for targeted interventions.

### 1.4 Policy Alignment

**1.4.1 Vision 2063:** Strengthening independence and lifelong learning aligns with the goal of self-reliant citizens.

**1.4.2 NESP 2020–2030:** QA tools address equity gaps in rural centres and gender disparities.

**1.4.3 SADC Protocols:** Harmonized QA tools support regional comparability.

**1.4.4 SDG 4.2:** Systematic monitoring provides evidence for universal access to quality ECD.

## 1.5 Recommendations

- 1.5.1. Strengthen caregiver training through accredited programmes emphasizing socio-emotional development, communication, and inclusion.
- 1.5.2. Invest in rural centres with age-appropriate materials, adapted resources, and improved infrastructure.
- 1.5.3. Institutionalize QA tools to systematically capture outcomes across domains and link them to inputs, processes, and outputs.
- 1.5.4. Mainstream inclusion by embedding disability-sensitive indicators and adapted practices into QA frameworks.
- 1.5.5. Enhance monitoring and accountability through district-level QA units to track outcomes and guide interventions.
- 1.5.6. Integrate QA findings into policy cycles to inform NESP reviews, Vision 2063 implementation, and SDG reporting.

## 1.6 Conclusion

Malawi's ECD sector shows encouraging progress but remains constrained by inequities in resources, caregiver capacity, and inclusion. Institutionalizing QA tools offers a pathway to strengthen governance, improve service delivery, and ensure that ECD provision contributes meaningfully to national transformation and global commitments.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar with a PhD in Assessment and Education Quality Assurance from the University of Pretoria. His work focuses on advancing quality assurance systems in Malawi's education sector, with particular emphasis on balancing access, equity, and standards.

His expertise lies in outcome framing across cognitive, affective, psychomotor, communication, and independence domains, ensuring clarity, alignment, and impact in curriculum design and monitoring systems. He is recognized for operational excellence in curriculum development, policy analysis, and scholarly publication, with a strong emphasis on embedding Malawian identity and values in academic outputs.

Dr. Msukuma has recently published and presented research on Quality Assurance in Malawi's Secondary Schools, examining how monitoring frameworks can simultaneously expand access, safeguard equity, and uphold academic standards. His scholarship integrates national priorities under Malawi Vision 2063 and the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESP 2020–2030) with regional frameworks such as the SADC Protocol on Education and Training and global commitments under SDG 4.

He is widely recognized for his expertise in curriculum innovation, outcome framing across cognitive, affective, psychomotor, communication, and independence domains, and the design of QA tools that translate policy into measurable evidence. His work continues to shape education reform in Malawi and Southern Africa, ensuring that quality assurance systems contribute to inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development.

**POLICY COHERENCE IN  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT (ECD):**

**ALIGNING EARLY CHILDHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT WITH NATIONAL  
EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES  
IN MALAWI**

**Dr Zizwa Msukuma**  
(Assessment and Quality  
Assurance Specialist)



(C2025)

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the coherence between Early Childhood Development (ECD) policies and Malawi's national education strategies. Although ECD is widely recognized as a foundation for lifelong learning and human capital, policy fragmentation and weak implementation remain challenges. Using document analysis and stakeholder consultations, the research identified points of alignment, divergence, and missed opportunities in integrating ECD into the broader reform agenda.

Findings show that ECD is acknowledged in high-level frameworks but inconsistently operationalized across ministries and sectors. To address this, the study proposed a sequenced model for policy harmonization. The model emphasizes inter-ministerial coordination, quality assurance, and inclusive financing. By embedding ECD into curriculum design, teacher development, and monitoring systems, the paper advances a coherent, equity-driven approach to strengthen early learning outcomes and national development goals.

This contribution highlights the need for systemic integration of ECD within Malawi's education priorities and offers actionable recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and quality assurance bodies.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Development (ECD), education policy, Malawi, policy coherence, quality assurance, curriculum design, teacher development, equity, lifelong learning, national development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / POLICY BRIEF

### Policy Coherence in Early Childhood Development (ECD): Aligning Early Childhood Development with National Educational Strategies in Malawi

#### 1.1 Background

Early Childhood Development (ECD) has long been recognized as the foundation for lifelong learning, equity, and human capital formation. In Malawi, multiple policies and strategies have referenced ECD, yet fragmentation across ministries and inconsistent implementation have limited its impact. Strengthening coherence between ECD and national education strategies is critical to achieving inclusive, quality education and national development goals.

#### 1.2 Key Findings

**1.2.1 Policy Recognition:** ECD is acknowledged in high-level frameworks, including education sector plans and national development strategies.

**1.2.2 Fragmentation:** Operationalization remain inconsistent, with overlapping mandates across ministries and limited coordination.

**1.2.3 Equity Gaps:** Rural and marginalized communities continue to face barriers in access, quality, and financing.

**1.2.4 Quality Assurance:** Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for ECD are underdeveloped compared to other education subsectors.

#### 1.3 Proposed Model for Coherence

The study developed a sequenced model to harmonize ECD with national education strategies:

**1.3.1. Inter-Ministerial Coordination:** Establishing clear governance structures linking education, health, and social welfare.

**1.3.2. Curriculum Integration:** Embedding ECD principles into teacher training and early grade curricula.

**1.3.3. Quality Assurance:** Strengthening monitoring cycles and accreditation frameworks for ECD providers.

**1.3.4. Inclusive Financing:** Expanding equitable funding mechanisms to reach rural and disadvantaged communities.

## **1.4 Policy Recommendations**

1.4.1 Align ECD explicitly within the Education Sector Strategic Plan and national development frameworks.

1.4.2 Institutionalize quality assurance systems for ECD, ensuring standards are monitored and enforced.

1.4.3 Expand teacher development programmes to include ECD pedagogy and inclusive practices.

1.4.4 Prioritize equity-driven financing, targeting rural and marginalized populations.

1.4.5 Foster multi-sectoral partnerships to integrate health, nutrition, and social protection into ECD delivery.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Strengthening policy coherence in ECD is essential for Malawi's educational transformation. By embedding ECD within national strategies, the country can ensure that every child—regardless of background—receives a strong foundation for lifelong learning and development. This policy brief

provides actionable pathways for policymakers, practitioners, and quality assurance bodies to advance equity, quality, and coherence in early childhood education.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in assessment and quality assurance in higher education and industry. He has been instrumental in designing and leading multi-institutional programmes, including the Curriculum Framework for the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry, which demonstrates his authority in the quality assurance regime. His work consistently integrates national policy priorities, ethical values, and lifelong learning principles into curriculum and reform initiatives.

Dr. Msukuma's research portfolio reflects a strong commitment to advancing Early Childhood Development (ECD) within Malawi's education system. His notable contributions include:

- a) **Monitoring Learning Outcomes in Early Childhood Development: Developing QA Tools for Malawi's ECD Centres** — a study that developed and validated a conceptual framework for monitoring learning outcomes in ECD centres, integrating child development domains with quality assurance dimensions and aligning them with national, regional, and global priorities.
- b) **Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi** — a publication examining how quality assurance systems can address equity gaps in basic education, with implications for ECD.
- c) Contributions to policy briefs and sectoral analyses that highlight the need for coherence between ECD and national education strategies, emphasizing inter-ministerial coordination, curriculum integration, and inclusive financing.

Beyond ECD, Dr. Msukuma has authored and co-authored works on curriculum innovation, governance-based quality assurance frameworks, and monitoring cycles for education reform. His scholarship is distinguished by meticulous structuring, visual clarity, and national resonance, embedding Malawian identity and symbolism into academic outputs.



# Quality Assurance in Malawi Secondary Schools: Balancing Access, Equity and Standards

**Dr. Zizwa Msukuma**  
Assessment and Quality Assurance Specialist



(C)2025

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Background**

Malawi's secondary education system has undergone significant reform, with policies designed to expand access, embed equity, and introduce national standards. Despite these ambitions, systemic tensions remain between policy goals and practical capacity, particularly in ensuring that reforms translate into sustainable improvements in quality assurance.

### **Methods**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining policy document analysis, survey data, and interviews with district education officials. This triangulation provided a comprehensive view of how Access, Equity, and Standards interact within Malawi's national quality assurance framework.

### **Findings**

Results show notable progress in enrolment expansion and the establishment of national education standards. However, persistent challenges include resource constraints, uneven transition rates, gender disparities, and rural–urban inequities. While standards provide a clear framework for quality, their impact is limited by weak monitoring capacity and inconsistent enforcement.

### **Contribution**

By framing Access, Equity, and Standards as interdependent pillars, the study advances a conceptual model that highlights systemic tensions and offers an integrated understanding of quality assurance in Malawi. This contribution extends national debates and situates Malawi's experience within broader Sub-Saharan African discourses on education reform.

### **Policy Implication**

The study recommends embedding equity indicators into monitoring systems, aligning enrolment expansion with resource investments, and strengthening district-level capacity for standards implementation. A unified quality assurance framework—balancing expansion, inclusivity, and standards—emerges as essential for transformative and sustainable reform..

**Key words:** Keywords: Access, Equity, Standards, Quality Assurance, Secondary Education, Education Reform

## **POLICY BRIEF**

### **1.0 Weaving Access, Equity, and Standards into Malawi's Quality Assurance Framework**

#### **1.1 Challenge**

Malawi's secondary education system has expanded rapidly, with reforms aimed at widening access, embedding equity, and introducing national standards. Yet systemic tensions persist: enrolment growth outpaces resources, equity gaps remain across gender and geography, and standards are inconsistently implemented due to limited monitoring capacity. These challenges risk undermining the transformative potential of reform.

#### **1.2 Evidence**

**1.2.1 Access:** Enrolment has expanded, but infrastructure, financing, and teacher deployment lag behind demand.

**1.2.2 Equity:** Girls and rural learners remain disproportionately disadvantaged, with socio-economic barriers limiting participation.

**1.2.3 Standards:** National frameworks exist, but weak district-level capacity constrains enforcement and professional development.

**1.2.4 Systemic Tension:** Policy ambition is high, but practical capacity is insufficient to sustain quality assurance.

#### **1.3 Recommendations**

##### **1.3.1 Policy Level**

**1.3.1.1** Embed equity indicators into national monitoring and evaluation systems.

**1.3.1.2** Align enrolment expansion with resource investments in infrastructure, teachers, and financing.

**1.3.1.3** Strengthen district education offices with funding and technical support for standards implementation.

**1.3.1.4** Develop a unified quality assurance framework integrating access, equity, and standards.

### **1.3.2 Practice Level**

1.3.2.1 Expand teacher professional development and school leadership training.

1.3.2.2 Engage communities and NGOs to address socio-cultural barriers, especially for girls and rural learners.

1.3.2.3 Promote low-cost, context-sensitive innovations (e.g., community learning support, digital tools).

1.3.2.4 Establish feedback loops between schools and authorities to inform responsive policy adjustments.

### **1.4 Implication**

A coherent, integrated quality assurance framework—balancing expansion, inclusivity, and standards—offers Malawi the pathway to sustainable reform and positions its education system within broader Sub-Saharan African transformation efforts.

## AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in quality assurance, curriculum innovation, and sectoral reform. He holds a PhD in Assessment and Education Quality Assurance from the University of Pretoria. Dr. Msukuma has designed and led multi-institutional programmes that integrate national policy priorities, ethical values, and lifelong learning frameworks into higher education and secondary education reform. His expertise lies in outcome framing across knowledge, affective, psychomotor, and communication domains, ensuring clarity, impact, and national resonance.

He has published widely on education governance, curriculum design, and quality assurance systems, with a particular focus on embedding equity and national identity into academic outputs. His recent work includes the study *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi*. Beyond scholarship, Dr. Msukuma is deeply committed to mentoring learners to become independent thinkers and responsible leaders, while advancing education reform across Malawi and Southern Africa.

# QUALITY ASSURANCE IN MALAWI'S PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Challenges of Access  
and Learning Outcomes

By Dr Zizwa Msukuma  
Assessment and Quality  
Assurance Specialist



(C2026)

## ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of quality assurance (QA) in shaping access and learning outcomes in Malawi's primary education system. Guided by a conceptual framework linking QA mechanisms to equity and achievement, the research employed a mixed-methods design, drawing on policy documents, school records, interviews, and surveys. Findings revealed persistent enrolment disparities across rural–urban and socio-economic lines, compounded by infrastructure shortages and resource constraints. Literacy and numeracy performance remained below expected benchmarks, with uneven teacher quality and limited professional development undermining instructional effectiveness. QA mechanisms—such as inspectorate services, school improvement grants, and national assessments—were found to be compliance-driven and unevenly implemented, limiting their capacity to foster continuous improvement. Interpreted against systems theory, accountability frameworks, and international benchmarks such as SDG4 and UNESCO's holistic quality agenda, the study highlighted the need to reorient QA from procedural oversight toward dynamic support systems that strengthen teacher capacity, address resource inequities, and ensure that expanded access leads to meaningful learning outcomes. The study contributes to knowledge by offering a holistic lens for analyzing QA in primary education and provides policy-relevant recommendations for strengthening QA structures in Malawi.

**Keywords:** Quality Assurance, Primary Education, Malawi, Access, Learning Outcomes, Equity, SDG4, UNESCO, Systems Theory, Accountability Frameworks

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / POLICY BRIEF

### Strengthening Quality Assurance in Malawi's Primary Education System: Bridging Access and Learning Outcomes

#### 1.1 Background

Malawi has made significant progress in expanding access to primary education since the introduction of Free Primary Education in 1994. However, persistent challenges remain in ensuring that expanded access translates into equitable and meaningful learning outcomes. Quality assurance (QA) mechanisms—such as inspectorate services, school improvement grants, and national assessments—exist but are often compliance-driven and unevenly implemented.

#### 1.2 Key Challenges

**1.2.1 Enrolment Disparities:** Gender parity achieved nationally, but rural–urban and socio-economic gaps persist, with over-aged learners and irregular attendance common in disadvantaged communities.

**1.2.2 Infrastructure and Resources:** Overcrowded classrooms, shortages of textbooks, and inadequate facilities undermine equitable participation and instructional quality.

**1.2.3 Learning Outcomes:** Literacy and numeracy performance remain below benchmarks; teacher quality is uneven, and professional development opportunities are limited.

**1.2.4 QA Mechanisms:** Existing structures emphasize compliance rather than instructional support, with irregular monitoring and limited reach in rural schools.

### 1.3 Contribution of the Study

This study applied a conceptual framework linking QA to access and learning outcomes, offering a holistic lens for analyzing Malawi's primary education system. By triangulating policy documents, school records, and stakeholder perspectives, the research provided evidence that QA must evolve from procedural oversight into a dynamic system of feedback and support.

### 1.4 Policy Recommendations

- 1.4.1 **Enhance Equity in Access:** Prioritize resource allocation to rural and disadvantaged schools to reduce disparities.
- 1.4.2 **Invest in Infrastructure and Materials:** Expand classroom construction and ensure adequate provision of textbooks and teaching resources.
- 1.4.3 **Strengthen Teacher Capacity:** Provide sustained professional development and mentorship to improve instructional practices.
- 1.4.4 **Reform Monitoring Systems:** Increase frequency and depth of inspectorate visits, shifting focus from compliance to pedagogical guidance.
- 1.4.5 **Integrate Assessment with Improvement:** Link assessment results to targeted interventions for learners and teachers.
- 1.4.6 **Align QA with International Benchmarks:** Embed principles of inclusion, learner well-being, and lifelong learning into QA processes, consistent with SDG4 and UNESCO's holistic quality agenda.

### 1.5 Implications for Policy and Practice

Transforming QA from a compliance-based model into a supportive, dynamic system is essential for bridging the gap between expanded access and improved learning outcomes. Policymakers should view QA not as an administrative exercise but as a strategic tool for equity, quality, and accountability. Aligning national QA reforms with international

commitments will position Malawi to achieve inclusive and equitable primary education that fulfills the promise of education for all.

## AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in curriculum innovation, quality assurance, and sectoral reform. He has designed and led multi-institutional programmes across higher education, teacher development, technical and vocational education, and basic education. Dr. Msukuma is the architect of the Curriculum Framework for the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry, a pioneering initiative that demonstrates his commitment to strengthening quality assurance regimes in Malawi and beyond.

His scholarly contributions include publications on equity and quality in education, with a particular focus on gender and rural inclusion. He is recognized for his expertise in outcome framing, policy analysis, and the integration of ethical values and national identity into curriculum design. Dr. Msukuma's work is distinguished by its clarity, strategic sequencing, and visual appeal, often employing matrices, diagrams, and thematic portfolios to engage diverse stakeholders.

Beyond academia, Dr. Msukuma plays a leading role in shaping education policy and governance reforms, linking national priorities with international frameworks such as SDG4 and UNESCO's holistic quality agenda. His vision is to transform education systems into inclusive, equitable, and quality-driven structures that empower learners and strengthen national development.

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN QUALITY ASSURANCE: THE ROLE OF PARENTS, COMMUNITIES, AND INDUSTRY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN MALAWI

**Dr Zizwa Msukuma**  
(Assessment and Quality Assurance Specialist)



(C2026)

## **ABSTRACT**

Quality assurance (QA) in education has increasingly emphasized stakeholder participation as a means of strengthening accountability, inclusivity, and relevance. This study examined the role of parents, communities, and industry in QA processes within Malawi's secondary education system. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis across selected schools, community structures, and industry representatives. Findings revealed that parents contributed primarily through monitoring student progress and supporting learning, communities mobilized resources and reinforced cultural values, while industry provided insights into curriculum relevance and employability. However, stakeholder engagement is not systematically integrated into Malawi's QA frameworks, limiting its overall impact. The study concluded that stakeholder synergy enhance QA by broadening accountability and aligning education with societal and labour market needs, but formal structures for collaboration remain weak.

Policy recommendations included institutionalizing stakeholder roles within QA frameworks, strengthening school-level platforms for engagement, and fostering industry partnerships to improve curriculum relevance. Future research should explore regional variations in stakeholder participation and assess long-term impacts on student outcomes.

**Keywords:** Quality Assurance, Stakeholder Engagement, Parents, Communities, Industry, Secondary Education, Malawi

## **POLICY BRIEF**

# **Stakeholder Engagement in Quality Assurance: The Role of Parents, Communities, and Industry in Secondary Education in Malawi**

## **1.1 Background**

Quality assurance (QA) in secondary education is critical for accountability, inclusivity, and relevance. This study examined how parents, communities, and industry contribute to QA in Malawi, revealing both strengths and gaps in stakeholder participation.

## **1.2 Key Findings**

**1.2.1 Parents:** Actively monitor student progress and supported learning, but lack formal influence in governance.

**1.2.2 Communities:** Mobilize resources and reinforced cultural values, yet engagement was informal and inconsistent.

**1.2.3 Industry:** Provide insights into curriculum relevance and employability, but participation was minimal and sporadic.

**1.2.4 Integration Gap:** Stakeholder roles are not systematically embedded in Malawi's QA frameworks, limiting impact.

## **1.3 Policy Recommendations**

**1.3.1 Ministry of Education:** Institutionalize stakeholder roles in QA policies and frameworks.

**1.3.2 QA Bodies:** Develop guidelines that explicitly define stakeholder contributions to monitoring and evaluation.

**1.3.3 Schools:** Strengthen PTAs and School Management Committees as platforms for structured engagement.

## **1.4 Practical Strategies for Schools**

1.4.1 Organize regular parent feedback forums and accountability workshops.

1.4.2 Engage chiefs, religious leaders, and local committees in governance and resource mobilization.

1.4.3 Invite industry representatives to contribute to curriculum reviews and provide workplace exposure opportunities.

**1.4.4 Industry:** Foster partnerships for curriculum co-design, internships, and career guidance.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Stakeholder synergy strengthens QA by broadening accountability and aligning education with societal and labour market needs. Formal structures for collaboration are essential to maximize impact and sustainability in Malawi's secondary education.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in quality assurance, curriculum innovation, and sectoral reform. He has contributed to regional qualifications harmonization through his involvement in the development of the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (2015) and the Malawi Qualifications Framework (2019). Dr. Msukuma also designed the Curriculum Framework for the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry, reflecting his commitment to strengthening governance and accountability in education systems.

His scholarly work includes publications on equity and quality in basic education, with a particular focus on gender and rural inclusion in Malawi. He is recognized for his expertise in outcome framing, policy analysis, and stakeholder engagement, and has led multi-institutional programs that integrate national identity, ethical values, and lifelong learning into education reform.

Dr. Msukuma's current research interests center on stakeholder participation in quality assurance, comparative policy analysis, and the alignment of education with industry needs. He remains deeply invested in advancing education governance in Malawi and the wider Southern African region.



**Strengthening Teacher Training  
through Ethics Education:**

**Integrating Ethical Competencies  
into Pre-Service and In-Service  
Teacher Development**

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**Zizwa Msukuma, PhD**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the integration of ethics education in teacher training across pre-service and in-service pathways. Using a qualitative design, data were collected from teacher trainees, practicing teachers, and policymakers through interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Findings revealed that ethics education was acknowledged but inconsistently embedded: pre-service programs offered limited, peripheral exposure, while in-service training provided sporadic reinforcement through workshops and codes of conduct. Strengths included recognition of ethics as vital to professionalism and the existence of formal standards. Weaknesses involved curriculum overload, lack of contextualization, and weak monitoring mechanisms. Challenges such as stakeholder resistance and resource constraints further hindered systematic integration. The study recommended embedding ethics as a core module in pre-service curricula, structured CPD workshops for in-service teachers, and policy-level alignment with national frameworks. Ethics education was concluded to be a cornerstone of teacher professionalism and quality assurance, requiring holistic, sustained integration.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This study investigated the integration of ethics education in teacher training, focusing on both pre-service and in-service pathways. Ethics education was identified as a cornerstone of teacher professionalism, essential for cultivating integrity, accountability, fairness, and inclusivity in teaching and learning.

### **1.1 Purpose and Rationale:**

The research addressed gaps in how ethics is embedded in teacher preparation and professional development. While ethics is widely acknowledged, its implementation remained fragmented and inconsistently prioritized.

### **1.2 Methodology:**

A qualitative design was employed, using purposive sampling of teacher trainees, practicing teachers, and policymakers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, surveys, and document analysis. The dual-pathway conceptual framework guided the analysis, positioning ethics education as a continuum from foundational exposure in pre-service training to adaptive reinforcement in in-service development.

### **1.3 Key Findings:**

1.3.1 Pre-service programs introduced ethics but often treated it as peripheral.

1.3.2 In-service training reinforced ethics through workshops and codes of conduct, but delivery was sporadic and weakly monitored.

1.3.3 Strengths included recognition of ethics as vital to professionalism and the existence of formal standards.

1.3.4 Weaknesses included curriculum overload, lack of contextualization, and reliance on personal values rather than structured frameworks.

#### **1.4 Discussion and Implications:**

The study confirmed literature insights that ethics education is inconsistently embedded. It highlighted implications for teacher professionalism, classroom practice, and policy, while identifying challenges such as stakeholder resistance and resource constraints.

#### **1.5 Recommendations:**

1.5.1 Embed ethics as a core module in pre-service curricula.

1.5.2 Develop structured, recurring CPD modules for in-service teachers.

1.5.3 Align national qualifications frameworks and codes of conduct with ethical competencies.

1.5.4 Implement examiner-friendly monitoring strategies, including benchmarks, feedback loops, and periodic reviews.

#### **1.6 Conclusion:**

Ethics education was shown to be a cornerstone of quality teaching and learning, yet inconsistently integrated. A holistic, sustained approach across pre-service and in-service pathways is required to strengthen teacher professionalism, enhance classroom practice, and reinforce quality assurance. Future research should explore cultural contextualization, longitudinal impacts, and technological innovations in ethics education.

## AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a distinguished education policy expert, researcher, and prolific author with extensive experience in curriculum reform, qualifications frameworks, and quality assurance systems across Southern Africa. He played a leading role in the development of the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (2015) and the Malawi Qualifications Framework (2019), and has authored influential works on equity, quality, and professional development in education.

Dr. Msukuma has designed postgraduate programs, including a Book whose title is *“Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry”*, demonstrating his commitment to advancing teacher professionalism and institutional accountability. His scholarly contributions include books and articles that integrate education policy with governance, inclusivity, and leadership frameworks.

He is widely recognized for his methodological rigor, particularly in systematic reviews, and for his examiner-friendly approach to academic writing and presentation. His current work focuses on embedding integrated quality assurance and leadership frameworks in Malawi's education system, while building a globally recognized portfolio that bridges theory, policy, and practice.

Beyond academia, Dr. Msukuma is deeply engaged in stakeholder communication, public visibility, and the promotion of ethics and professionalism as cornerstones of sustainable education reform.

# **Teacher competence and classroom quality in Basic Education: Governance and Accountability perspectives**

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**Dr Zizwa Msukuma**

(Assessment and Quality Assurance Specialist)



## ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between teacher competence and classroom quality in Malawi's basic education system, analyzed through governance and accountability perspectives. Drawing on a mixed-methods design, the research utilized policy documents, EMIS statistics, classroom observations, interviews, and surveys to examine how teacher capacity interacts with systemic structures to shape learning outcomes.

Findings revealed that teacher competence—encompassing subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, professional values, adaptability, and collaboration—is essential but insufficient in isolation. Classroom quality is undermined by overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, high repetition rates, and limited inclusivity, particularly in rural schools. Governance frameworks such as the Education Act and NESP 2020–2030 provide strategic direction, yet enforcement remains weak, and accountability mechanisms are inconsistently applied. These gaps contribute to inefficiencies, low completion rates, and persistent inequities.

The study concluded that strengthening teacher competence must be accompanied by robust governance and accountability reforms to ensure sustainable improvements in classroom quality.

Recommendations emphasized professional development, equitable resource allocation, revitalized accountability systems, and alignment with global education goals, notably SDG 4.

**Key words:** Teacher Competence; Classroom Quality; Education Governance; Accountability Mechanisms; Malawi Basic Education; Equity and Inclusion in Education

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / POLICY BRIEF

### Teacher Competence and Classroom Quality in Basic Education: Governance and Accountability Perspectives

#### 1.1 Background

Malawi's basic education system has expanded significantly, with 5.2 million learners enrolled in primary school by 2018 and a Net Enrolment Rate (NER) of 90%. Yet, completion rates remain low (52% in 2018), repetition is high (32.8% in Standard 1), and learning outcomes lag behind regional and international standards. These challenges highlight systemic inefficiencies that undermine equity and quality. Teacher competence is central to improving classroom quality, but weak governance and accountability mechanisms limit its impact.

#### 1.2 Key Findings

**1.2.1 Teacher Competence:** Gaps in subject knowledge, limited learner-centered pedagogy, weak adaptability, and minimal ICT integration.

**1.2.2 Classroom Quality:** Overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructure, and limited inclusivity, especially for girls and learners with disabilities.

**1.2.3 Governance:** Policies (Education Act, NESP 2020–2030) provide strategic direction but enforcement is weak; rural schools face disproportionate resource shortages.

**1.2.4 Accountability:** Monitoring and evaluation systems are inconsistent; community oversight is underutilized; performance data is not systematically shared.

#### 1.3 Policy Recommendations

##### 1.3.1. Invest in Teacher Development

- a) Expand continuous professional development.
- b) Integrate inclusive pedagogy and ICT training.
- c) Provide incentives for rural deployment.

### **1.3.2. Improve Classroom Quality**

- a. Build disability-friendly infrastructure.
- b. Reduce overcrowding through classroom expansion.
- c. Promote learner-centered and innovative teaching practices.

### **1.3.3. Strengthen Governance Structures**

- a. Enforce admission age and qualification standards.
- b. Ensure equitable resource allocation, prioritizing rural schools.
- c. Build district-level capacity for oversight.

### **1.3.4. Revitalize Accountability Mechanisms**

- a. Institutionalize regular teacher appraisals.
- b. Enhance transparency through performance reporting.
- c. Empower school management committees with training and resources.

### **1.3.5. Advance Equity and Inclusion**

- a. Implement gender-sensitive interventions to improve girls' completion rates.
- b. Provide targeted support for learners with disabilities.
- c. Address rural-urban disparities through resource redistribution.

### **1.3.6. Align with Global Goals**

Integrate reforms with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and the African Union's CESA 16–25.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

Teacher competence is indispensable but cannot drive classroom quality without strong governance and accountability. Malawi must move beyond policy articulation to effective enforcement, equitable resource allocation, and systemic accountability. Embedding competence within robust governance and inclusive accountability frameworks will improve efficiency, equity, and learning outcomes, positioning Malawi to meet both national and global education commitments.

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in curriculum innovation, quality assurance, and sectoral reform. He is the architect of the Curriculum Framework for the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry, demonstrating his leadership in advancing governance and accountability in education. Dr. Msukuma has designed and led multi-institutional programs that integrate national policy priorities, ethical values, and lifelong learning into higher education and basic education reforms. His scholarly portfolio includes publications such as *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi*, reflecting his commitment to inclusive and values-driven education.

Renowned for his meticulous approach to curriculum design, manuscript structuring, and policy analysis, Dr. Msukuma combines academic rigor with practical relevance. He is deeply invested in embedding Malawian identity and national symbolism into scholarly outputs, ensuring resonance with both local and international audiences. His work continues to shape education governance, teacher development, and quality assurance frameworks across Malawi and the wider region.



# **CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK**

**FOR POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA  
IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION & INDUSTRY**

**Dr Zizwa Msukuma**  
(Assessment & Education Quality  
Assurance Specialist)



## **POLICY BRIEF**

### **1.0 INTRODUCING THE POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY (PDQA-HEI)**

**Date:** February 2026

#### **1.1 Executive Summary**

Quality assurance (QA) is the backbone of both higher education and industry competitiveness. Yet, Malawi and the wider SADC region lack a formal postgraduate qualification dedicated to QA. Currently, only Mauritius offers such a programme. The proposed Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Industry (PDQA-HEI) positions Malawi as a regional pioneer, equipping professionals with the skills to strengthen institutional governance, meet international standards, and drive industrial competitiveness.

This programme will:

- Build a cadre of QA specialists for higher education and industry.
- Align Malawi's education and industry with Vision 2063 and global standards.
- Enhance regional integration by offering a qualification unique in SADC.
- Improve compliance, efficiency, and competitiveness across sectors.

#### **1.2 Problem Statement**

- a) **Absence of Specialized Training:** No university in Malawi or SADC currently offers a postgraduate qualification in QA, leaving institutions and industries reliant on fragmented training or external expertise.
- b) **Weak QA Systems:** Higher education institutions struggle with accreditation, monitoring, and continuous improvement, while industries face challenges in meeting ISO and sector-specific standards.
- c) **Global Competitiveness Gap:** Malawian industries risk exclusion from international markets without robust QA frameworks and certification.

- d) Policy Imperative: Vision 2063 emphasizes efficiency, accountability, and competitiveness, but lacks a dedicated pipeline of QA professionals to operationalize these goals.

### **1.3 Rationale for the Programme**

#### **1.3.1. Higher Education Transformation**

- a) Strengthens accreditation and monitoring systems.
- b) Enhances institutional credibility and international recognition.
- c) Improves graduate employability through exposure to QA frameworks.

#### **1.3.2. Industrial Competitiveness**

- a) Equips professionals to implement ISO 9001, ISO 14001, Six Sigma, and Lean QA.
- b) Strengthens supply chain QA, vendor audits, and risk management.
- c) Reduces inefficiencies, product recalls, and reputational risks.

#### **1.3.3. National Development Alignment**

- a) Directly supports Malawi Vision 2063 pillars of industrialization, human capital development, and governance.
- b) Builds capacity for lifelong learning and professionalization of QA roles.

#### **1.3.4. Regional Leadership**

- a) Positions Malawi as a QA education hub in SADC.
- b) Creates opportunities for cross-border training, consultancy, and partnerships.
- c) Aligns with AU and UNESCO frameworks on higher education quality.

## Expected Impact

Domain	Impact
Higher Education	Stronger accreditation, improved QA culture, enhanced institutional reputation
Industry	Compliance with international standards, improved competitiveness, stronger supply chains
National Policy	Operationalization of Vision 2063, improved governance, reduced inefficiencies
Regional Integration	Malawi as a QA hub in SADC, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange
Learners	Career advancement, leadership roles in QA, ability to influence policy and practice

### 1.4 Recommendations

- a. Universities should integrate the programme into postgraduate offerings, ensuring alignment with national and regional QA frameworks.
- b. Industry stakeholders should be engaged as partners, providing case studies, internships, and certification pathways.
- c. Regional collaboration should be pursued to position Malawi as the SADC hub for QA education.

### 1.5 Conclusion

The Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Industry is more than an academic programme—it is a strategic intervention. By pioneering this qualification, Malawi will strengthen its education system, enhance industrial competitiveness, and establish itself as a regional leader in quality assurance. Endorsing and implementing this programme is a decisive step toward achieving Vision 2063 and positioning Malawi as a driver of excellence in SADC.

**COMPARATIVE QUALITY  
ASSURANCE MODELS  
IN TVET:**

**LESSONS FOR MALAWI  
FROM SUB-  
SAHARAN AFRICA**

**Dr Zizwa Msukuma**

**Assessment and Quality  
Assurance Specialist**



## ABSTRACT

This study examined comparative quality assurance (QA) models in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) across Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, and Botswana, with the aim of deriving lessons for Malawi. Guided by Systems Theory and Policy Transfer/Borrowing Frameworks, the analysis explored governance structures, accreditation mechanisms, monitoring processes, and industry linkages. Findings revealed that effective QA depended on coherent governance, continuous improvement tools, and strong industry participation, though challenges persisted in resource allocation, institutional capacity, and enforcement. The study contributed actionable lessons for Malawi, including the establishment of a centralized QA authority, institutional reforms to embed internal QA systems, capacity-building strategies, and integration of QA into lifelong learning pathways. It concluded that while external models offered valuable insights, selective adaptation was essential to ensure cultural relevance and sustainability. The study underscored the importance of regional collaboration and recommended further research on digital QA innovations and long-term impacts on employability and equity.

Keywords: Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); Quality Assurance (QA); Comparative Education; Systems Theory; Policy Transfer and Borrowing; Malawi Education Reform; Sub-Saharan Africa

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma Chisi is a Malawian education strategist and scholar whose work focuses on curriculum innovation, quality assurance, and sectoral reform in higher education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). He earned his PhD in Education from the University of Pretoria, where his doctoral research critically examined quality assurance mechanisms in Malawi's TVET system. Dr. Msukuma has played a leading role in designing and implementing multi-institutional programs, including the Curriculum Framework for the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry, which has strengthened national QA regimes.

His scholarly contributions include publications on equity and quality in basic education, gender and rural inclusion in QA systems, and comparative analyses of QA frameworks in Sub-Saharan Africa. He has also supervised postgraduate research on competency-based education and QA in community technical colleges. Dr. Msukuma's research interests span comparative QA models, policy transfer and adaptation, and the integration of QA into lifelong learning and industry relevance. He remains committed to embedding national identity and policy priorities into education reforms, while advancing scholarship that bridges theory, practice, and policy for sustainable development in Malawi and beyond.

# Governance–Based Quality Assurance in TVET: A Framework for Policy Reform in Malawi

**By Dr Zizwa Msukuma**

Assessment and Quality Assurance Specialist



## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated governance challenges in Malawi's Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) quality assurance (QA) system. Although formal structures exist under the TEVET Act (1999) and TEVET Policy (2013), QA processes remain fragmented, compliance-driven, and insufficiently inclusive. Policy analysis, document review, and stakeholder consultations revealed institutional fragmentation, weak oversight, limited funding, and marginal stakeholder participation as key constraints.

Comparative insights from Zambia, Kenya, and South Africa demonstrated that unified qualifications frameworks, strong QA authorities, and workplace-integrated monitoring systems enhance accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to labor market needs. Drawing on governance theories of accountability, transparency, and participation, the study proposed a governance-based QA framework structured across four domains: policy alignment, institutional coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and equity.

The framework strengthens TVET governance by embedding accountability, inclusiveness, and efficiency into QA processes. It aligns reforms with Malawi Vision 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring that QA contributes to employability, skills development, and national competitiveness while advancing scholarship on governance in education reform.

**Keywords:** Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); Quality Assurance (QA); Governance; Accountability; Transparency; Malawi 2063

## AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar specializing in governance, curriculum innovation, and quality assurance reform. He has designed and led multi-institutional programmes that embed national identity, ethical values, and lifelong learning into education outcomes. His scholarship focuses on linking governance theory with practical reforms in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Dr. Msukuma has contributed significantly to scholarship on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and quality assurance in Malawi and the wider African region. Part of his publication portfolio includes:

- a. Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi
- b. Governance and Quality Assurance in TVET: Comparative Lessons from Zambia, Kenya, and South Africa
- c. Policy Alignment and Institutional Coordination in Malawi's TVET Sector: Towards a Governance-Based Framework
- d. Embedding Accountability and Transparency in Education Reform: The Case of Malawi's TEVET Authority

Through these works, Dr. Msukuma advances both scholarship and practice by linking governance theory with actionable reforms in education systems. His current research focuses on strengthening Malawi's TVET quality assurance system through a governance-based framework aligned with Malawi Vision 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

# INTEGRATING LIFELONG LEARNING INTO MALAWI'S TVET SYSTEM:

*Addressing the Absence of Validation  
Mechanisms and Rigid Entry Requirements*



**Dr Zizwa  
Msukuma**

*(Assessment &  
Education Quality  
Assurance Specialist)*

## ABSTRACT

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is central to Malawi's national development aspirations, particularly those articulated in Malawi 2063. Yet the current system remains constrained by rigid entry requirements, limited recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and weak policy integration. This study examined how lifelong learning principles can be embedded into Malawi's TVET system, drawing on global frameworks, regional experiences, and empirical evidence.

A mixed-methods research design was adopted. Quantitative data were analyzed using Chi-Square and regression techniques to assess the impact of entry requirements and potential reforms on enrollment and employability outcomes. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with policymakers, administrators, employers, and learners, complemented by comparative case studies from South Africa, Zambia, and Kenya. The Delphi method was employed to refine reform proposals through expert consensus.

Findings revealed that rigid reliance on the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) excluded large groups of potential learners, including rural youth, school dropouts, and adults with experiential skills. The absence of a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) framework further marginalized informal and non-formal competencies, while weak policy integration limited alignment between TVET provision and national development priorities. Comparative evidence demonstrated that reforms such as RPL, competency-based training, and flexible pathways are both feasible and effective in expanding access and improving employability.

The study concluded that embedding lifelong learning into Malawi's TVET system is both an equity imperative and a strategic necessity for national development. Policy recommendations include introducing RPL mechanisms, reforming entry requirements, integrating lifelong learning principles into curricula, strengthening governance and stakeholder engagement, and investing in institutional capacity. Scholarly contributions include contextualizing lifelong learning within Malawi's socio-economic realities, operationalizing human capital and lifelong learning theories, and providing a conceptual framework that links inputs, reform processes, and outcomes.

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providing a conceptual framework that links inputs, reform processes, and outcomes.

**Keywords:** Malawi, TVET, Lifelong Learning, MSCE Requirement, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), National Qualifications Framework (NQF), Policy Reform, Workforce Development, Equity, Informal and Non-Formal Learning

## Author's Bio

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar, formerly Director of Teacher Education and Development in the Ministry of Education, Science & Technology. He holds a PhD in Assessment and Education Quality Assurance from the University of Pretoria and has led institutional reform and quality assurance initiatives across TEVET Authority Malawi, Lerotholi Polytechnic (Lesotho), Mzuzu University, and the University of Livingstonia.

Dr. Msukuma has authored and co-authored a growing body of scholarly and policy-relevant publications, including the recently completed paper *Quality Assurance in Malawi's Higher Education: Balancing Institutional Autonomy and Policy Coherence*. His other works include:

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# Reframing Quality Assurance in Malawi's TVET System: Towards Policy-Driven Governance Frameworks



Dr Zizwa  
Msukuma

*(Assessment &  
Education Quality  
Assurance Specialist)*

## **Abstract**

Quality assurance (QA) in Malawi's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions is mandated by the TEVET Act of 1999. Despite this legal provision, QA implementation remains inadequate due to fragmented governance, limited institutional autonomy, and weak regulatory enforcement. This article conceptualized QA as a governance and policy challenge. Drawing on phenomenological research and institutional audits, it identified five thematic barriers—resource constraints, ineffective QA processes, staff development gaps, parallel qualifications, and weak governance—and proposes a three-tier governance framework to guide reform. A governance matrix was presented to support policy coherence, institutional autonomy, and continuous improvement. The article contributed to education policy discourse by offering a practical model for strengthening QA in TVET systems across developing contexts.

## **Keywords**

Quality Assurance; TVET; Governance; Accreditation; Policy Reform; Malawi; Lifelong Learning.

## **1.0 Policy Brief: Strengthening Quality Assurance in Malawi's TVET System**

### **1.1 Purpose:**

To provide policymakers, institutional leaders, and stakeholders with concise, actionable recommendations for reframing QA in TVET as a governance issue, aligned with Malawi 2063.

### **1.2 Key Messages**

- a) QA in Malawi's TVET system remains fragmented and underdeveloped.
- b) Governance reform is the central driver of effective QA.
- c) Institutional accountability, stakeholder engagement, and industry linkages are essential.
- d) Sustainable investment is required to move QA beyond symbolic compliance.

### **1.3 Recommendations**

#### **1.3.1 For Policymakers**

- a) Establish a coherent national QA framework with clear enforcement mechanisms.
- b) Strengthen TEVETA's monitoring and evaluation capacity.
- c) Integrate TVET financing into national budgets to reduce donor dependence.
- d) Align QA frameworks with Vision 2063 and lifelong learning principles.

#### **1.3.2 For Institutions**

- a) Operationalize QMS with documentation, performance indicators, and feedback loops.
- b) Conduct internal audits and benchmarking for continuous improvement.
- c) Invest in staff training and infrastructure to support competency-based delivery.
- d) Foster a culture of quality where QA is seen as improvement, not compliance.

#### **1.3.3 For Stakeholders (Employers, Communities, Learners)**

- a) Strengthen partnerships between institutions and employers to align curricula with labour market needs.
- b) Establish advisory boards with industry representatives.


- c) Involve learners and communities in QA processes to ensure inclusivity.

## STRENGTHENING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN MALAWI'S TVET SYSTEM: POLICY BRIEF

**Key Messages**

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**Recommendations**



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**For Stakeholders (Employers, Communities, Learners)**

- Strengthen partnerships between institutions and employers to align curricula with labour market needs
- Establish advisory boards with industry representatives
- Involve learners and communities in QA processes to ensure inclusivity




Policy



Governance



Institutions



Stakeholders

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# REPOSITIONING TEVET IN MALAWI

Strategic Policy Framework for  
Skills Development and  
Economic Transformation



**Dr Zizwa  
Msukuma**

*(Assessment &  
Education Quality  
Assurance Specialist)*



## **Abstract**

Technical, Entrepreneurial, Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) has long been recognized as a critical driver of national productivity, employability, and economic transformation. In Malawi, however, the TEVET system has experienced stagnation despite its early foundations in missionary education and subsequent government initiatives supported by the World Bank and IDA. This paper traces the historical trajectory of TEVET in Malawi, examining its governance structures, financing priorities, curriculum relevance, and access challenges.

Findings revealed that governance instability—particularly the shifting of TEVET oversight between ministries—has undermined coherence and policy continuity. Financing remains inadequate and misaligned, with limited investment in infrastructure and instructor training. Curricula are outdated, lack entrepreneurial integration, and remain disconnected from academic progression due to the absence of a National Qualifications Framework. Access is severely constrained, with technical colleges established in the 1970s still serving as the backbone of the system despite rapid population growth.

Comparative lessons from the Asian Tigers demonstrated that deliberate investment in skill-based education, stable governance, and curriculum alignment with labour market needs can catalyze rapid development. Aligning Malawi's TEVET reforms with the aspirations of Malawi 2063—particularly its pillars of human capital development, innovation, and inclusive wealth creation—offered a pathway to reposition TEVET as a strategic lever for transformation. The paper concluded with actionable recommendations for stabilizing governance, increasing financing,

modernizing curricula, expanding access, and establishing a National Qualifications Framework to unlock TEVET's full potential in driving Malawi's economic growth.

**Keywords:** Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET), Skills Development, Education Policy Reform, Governance and Financing in Education, Curriculum Relevance, Access and Equity in Training, Malawi 2063.

## Policy Brief

# REPOSITIONING TEVET IN MALAWI: A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND REFORM PATHWAYS

## 1.1 Background

Technical, Entrepreneurial, Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) is globally recognized as a driver of productivity, employability, and inclusive growth. In Malawi, however, TEVET has stagnated despite its early foundations in missionary education and subsequent government initiatives supported by the World Bank and IDA. Persistent challenges in governance, financing, curriculum relevance, and access have limited its transformative potential.

## 1.2 Key Challenges

**1.2.1 Governance Instability:** Frequent shifts of TEVET oversight between ministries have undermined coherence and policy continuity.

**1.2.2 Financing Gaps:** Investment remains inadequate and misaligned, with limited resources for infrastructure and instructor training.

**1.2.3 Curriculum Irrelevance:** Outdated curricula lack entrepreneurial integration and are disconnected from academic progression due to the absence of a National Qualifications Framework.

**1.2.4 Access Constraints:** Technical colleges established in the 1970s still serve as the backbone of the system, failing to meet the demands of rapid population growth and labour market shifts.

## 1.3 Comparative Insights

Lessons from the Asian Tigers demonstrate that deliberate investment in skill-based education, stable governance, and curriculum alignment with labour market needs can catalyze rapid development. These insights highlight the urgency of reforming Malawi's TEVET system to align with Malawi 2063 aspirations.

## 1.4 Policy Recommendations

- 1.4.1. **Stabilize Governance:** Establish a clear and consistent institutional home for TEVET to ensure policy coherence and continuity.
- 1.4.2. **Increase Financing:** Prioritize investment in infrastructure, instructor training, and modern equipment to strengthen delivery capacity.
- 1.4.3. **Modernize Curricula:** Integrate entrepreneurship, innovation, and digital skills, while aligning curricula with labour market needs.
- 1.4.4. **Expand Access:** Establish new technical colleges and diversify training pathways to meet growing demand and promote equity.
- 1.4.5. **National Qualifications Framework (NQF):** Develop and implement an NQF to connect TEVET with academic progression and lifelong learning.

## 1.5 Strategic Alignment

Reforms must be anchored in Malawi 2063, particularly its pillars of human capital development, innovation, and inclusive wealth creation. A revitalized TEVET system can serve as a strategic lever for economic transformation, equipping Malawians with the skills necessary to drive national development.

**Keywords:** TEVET, Skills Development, Education Policy Reform, Governance and Financing, Curriculum Relevance, Access and Equity, Malawi 2063

## **Acknowledgements**

The author gratefully acknowledges the support and contributions of several institutions and individuals who made this study possible. Special thanks are extended to the Technical, Entrepreneurial, Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA) for providing valuable insights and documentation on the evolution of skills development in Malawi. Appreciation is also due to the Principals of Lilongwe Technical College and Soche Technical College, whose cooperation and perspectives enriched the analysis of institutional challenges and opportunities.

The author further acknowledges Mr. Rashid Khowoya, Retired Technical and Vocational Expert and former Secondary School Head Teacher, for his guidance and reflections on the historical trajectory of TEVET in Malawi. Gratitude is also expressed to representatives from industry and higher education institutions, whose engagement highlighted the importance of aligning TEVET curricula with labour market demands and academic progression pathways.

Their collective contributions have provided critical context and strengthened the relevance of this study to both academic discourse and policy reform.

## **Funding Statement**

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Expert and former Secondary School Head Teacher, were invaluable in shaping the analysis.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Author's Bio

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar, formerly Director of Teacher Education and Development in the Ministry of Education, Science & Technology. He holds a PhD in Assessment and Education Quality Assurance from the University of Pretoria and has led institutional reform and quality assurance initiatives across TEVET Authority Malawi, Lerotholi Polytechnic (Lesotho), Mzuzu University, and the University of Livingstonia.

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10. **Professional Development and Quality Assurance: Evaluating In-Service training systems for Teachers in Malawi-** This work critically examines the structures and delivery mechanisms of in-service teacher training in Malawi, situating them within broader quality assurance frameworks.
11. **Bridging Curriculum and Classroom realities in Malawi's Teacher Education System: Reform Oversight, Policy Trajectories and Regional Benchmarking-** This publication explores the persistent gap between curriculum design and classroom realities in Malawi's teacher education system. Dr. Msukuma traces reform trajectories,

identifying areas where policy intent has failed to translate into practical classroom impact.

- 12. Capacity Building for Quality Assurance in TVET Institutions: Leadership, Staff Development and Resource Mobilization** - This study addresses the foundational role of capacity building in strengthening quality assurance systems within Malawi's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. Dr. Msukuma emphasizes leadership development, staff training, and strategic resource mobilization as critical levers for institutional resilience.

His work is distinguished by its integration of comparative analysis, stakeholder engagement, and operational clarity — often combining academic articles with policy briefs, toolkits, and workshop facilitation. Dr. Msukuma is deeply committed to transforming education sector governance in Malawi and the region, and continues to lead efforts that align national reforms with global frameworks such as SDG 4, AU/CESA, and the Global Education Monitoring Report.



# AGRI-TVET: UNLOCKING SKILLS FOR AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN MALAWI



Dr Zizwa  
Msukuma

*(Assessment &  
Education Quality  
Assurance Specialist)*



## **Abstract**

Agriculture remains central to Malawi's economy, employing the majority of the population and contributing significantly to GDP. Yet persistent challenges—low productivity, limited access to modern technologies, weak market integration, and a mismatch between education systems and labor market demands—continue to constrain transformation. At the same time, Malawi's youthful demographic presents both risk and opportunity: without meaningful pathways into productive work, the demographic dividend may be lost; with targeted skills development, youth can drive innovation and agribusiness growth.

This paper positions Agriculture-focused Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Agri-TVET) as a strategic solution to bridge these gaps. Drawing on national statistics, policy documents, comparative case studies, and secondary literature, the analysis synthesizes evidence to show how Agri-TVET can strengthen human capital, modernize agriculture, and foster inclusive growth. Policy recommendations emphasize alignment with Malawi Vision 2063, highlighting Agri-TVET's potential to transform agriculture from subsistence to prosperity.

**Key Words:** Malawi, agriculture, youth, TVET, skills development, policy analysis, Vision 2063

## Executive Summary

### Policy Brief: Agri-TVET for Malawi's Agricultural Transformation

#### 1.1 Background

Agriculture remains the backbone of Malawi's economy, yet low productivity, limited skills, and weak market integration constrain its potential. Meanwhile, Malawi's youthful demographic offers a powerful opportunity for transformation if equipped with relevant skills.

#### 1.2 Strategic Solution

Agriculture-focused Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Agri-TVET) provides a pathway to modernize farming, empower youth, and accelerate progress toward Malawi Vision 2063.

#### 1.3 Action Checklist for Policymakers

**1.3.1 Strengthen institutional frameworks:** Establish a dedicated Agri-TVET policy and coordination platform.

**1.3.2 Align curricula with market needs:** Integrate agribusiness, entrepreneurship, climate-smart agriculture, and digital skills.

**1.3.3 Expand partnerships and resources:** Foster public-private collaboration and donor support for pilot centers of excellence.

**1.3.4 Leverage ICT and digital platforms:** Deliver training, advisory services, and market linkages through mobile and online tools.

**1.3.5 Embed monitoring and evaluation:** Track productivity gains, youth employment, and enterprise creation.

#### 1.4 Policy Alignment

This framework directly supports Malawi Vision 2063's pillars of agricultural commercialization, industrialization, and inclusive wealth creation.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of colleagues, institutions, and partners who provided insights and resources that shaped this paper. Special appreciation is extended to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture in Malawi for their policy documents and statistical reports, which informed the analysis. The support of regional and international organizations, including UNESCO and the African Union, is also recognized for their comparative case studies and frameworks that enriched the discussion. Finally, sincere thanks go to academic peers and reviewers whose feedback strengthened the clarity and relevance of the arguments presented.

## Author's Bio

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is a Malawian education strategist and scholar, formerly Director of Teacher Education and Development in the Ministry of Education, Science & Technology. He holds a PhD in Assessment and Education Quality Assurance from the University of Pretoria and has led institutional reform and quality assurance initiatives across TEVET Authority Malawi, Lerotholi Polytechnic (Lesotho), Mzuzu University, and the University of Livingstonia.

Dr. Msukuma has authored and co-authored a growing body of scholarly and policy-relevant publications, including the recently completed paper *Quality Assurance in Malawi's Higher Education: Balancing Institutional Autonomy and Policy Coherence*. His other works include:

Dr. Msukuma has authored a growing body of scholarly and policy-relevant publications, including:

1. **Repositioning TEVET in Malawi: A Strategic Analysis of Institutional Governance and Reform Pathways**
2. **Integrating Lifelong Learning into Malawi's TVET System: A Policy Blueprint for Inclusive and Future-Ready Skills Development**
3. **Quality Assurance in TVET: Comparative Lessons and Frameworks for Institutional Strengthening**
4. **Agri-TVET and Rural Transformation: Linking Agricultural Training to Community Resilience and Economic Empowerment**
5. **Total Quality Management Framework for Private Universities in Malawi: Aligning Governance, Accountability and National Development- Applying TQM Principles to Enhance Institutional Performance and Accountability**
6. **Institutional Placement of ECD in Malawi: Policy Misalignment between Gender and Education Ministries: A Comparative Study of Institutional Placement and Governance Misalignment between Gender and Education Ministries**
7. **Manual on Research Methodology: A Practical Guide for Postgraduate Students and Education Practitioners Conducting Policy-Relevant Research**
8. **Quality Assurance in Malawi's Higher Education System: Balancing Autonomy and Coherence** — A comprehensive study that integrates global, regional, and

national perspectives on QA, offering actionable policy recommendations for Malawi's universities and aligning reforms with Malawi 2063.

9. **Higher Education Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa: Comparative Pathways for Policy Coherence** — A practical resource for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners, providing comparative lessons from Zambia, South Africa, and Malawi, and offering frameworks to strengthen governance and QA systems across the region.

His work is distinguished by its integration of comparative analysis, stakeholder engagement, and operational clarity — often combining academic articles with policy briefs, toolkits, and workshop facilitation. Dr. Msukuma is deeply committed to transforming education sector governance in Malawi and the region, and continues to lead efforts that align national reforms with global frameworks such as SDG 4, AU/CEESA, and the Global Education Monitoring Report.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Managing Private Schools  
and Colleges in Malawi:  
Governance, Quality Assurance,  
and Compliance for Sustainable  
Education**



*by* **Zizwa Msukuma, PhD**

## **Abstract**

Private education in Malawi has grown significantly over the past three decades, becoming a vital complement to public provision and a driver of national development. This study critically examines governance, compliance, and quality assurance in private schools and colleges, situating institutional practices within Malawi's policy frameworks and international commitments such as Sustainable Development Goal 4, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and Malawi's Vision 2063.

Guided by governance theory, institutional theory, and quality assurance frameworks, the research adopted a qualitative, policy-oriented design enriched by comparative case studies from Zambia, Mauritius, and Lesotho. Data sources included national policy documents, statutory regulations, and scholarly literature.

Findings revealed persistent governance gaps, weak enforcement of compliance standards, and uneven application of quality assurance mechanisms, resulting in disparities in educational outcomes. Comparative insights highlight the potential of decentralized oversight, regulatory rigor, and qualifications frameworks to strengthen institutional legitimacy and sustainability.

The study concluded that Malawi's private education sector requires enhanced governance capacity, systematic compliance audits, and integration into national education planning. By offering evidence-based recommendations, the research contributed to policy, practice, and scholarship, positioning private schools and colleges as transformative partners in achieving inclusive and equitable quality education under Vision 2063 and the National Education Sector Plan (NESP 2020–2030).

**Keywords:** Private education, governance, compliance, quality assurance, Malawi, Vision 2063, NESP 2020–2030, Sustainable Development Goal 4, institutional legitimacy, comparative case studies

## **Executive Summary**

# **Managing Private Schools and Colleges in Malawi: Governance, Quality Assurance, and Compliance for Sustainable Education**

## **1.1 Background**

Private education in Malawi has expanded rapidly over the past three decades, complementing public provision and responding to rising demand for access, diversity, and quality. From Early Childhood Development centres to higher education institutions, private providers have played a pivotal role in widening opportunities and contributing to national development goals.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Despite this growth, the sector faces persistent governance and compliance gaps. Weak boards of governors, limited accountability mechanisms, uneven enforcement of standards, and fragmented quality assurance practices undermine institutional legitimacy and sustainability.

## **1.3 Objectives**

The study analyzed governance, compliance, and quality assurance in private schools and colleges. Specifically, it examined policy frameworks, assessed governance and accountability mechanisms, evaluated compliance with minimum standards, and explored quality assurance practices and their impact on educational outcomes.

## **1.4 Methodology**

A qualitative, policy-oriented design was adopted, guided by governance theory, institutional theory, and quality assurance frameworks. Data sources included national policy documents, statutory regulations, and scholarly literature, enriched by comparative case studies from Zambia, Mauritius, and Lesotho.

## **1.5 Key Findings**

- a) Governance: Boards of governors and accountability structures remain weak and inconsistently applied.

- b) **Compliance:** Licensing, accreditation, and teacher qualification standards are unevenly enforced.
- c) **Quality Assurance:** Curriculum alignment and student welfare measures vary widely, leading to disparities in outcomes.
- d) **Comparative Insights:** Zambia’s decentralized oversight, Mauritius’s regulatory rigor, and Lesotho’s qualifications framework offer transferable lessons for Malawi.

## **1.6 Policy Relevance**

The findings highlight the need to align private education with the National Education Sector Plan (NESP 2020–2030) and Vision 2063, ensuring inclusivity, accountability, and sustainability.

## **1.7 Recommendations**

- **Short-Term:** Strengthen inspection, compliance audits, and teacher licensing.
- **Medium-Term:** Build governance capacity, enhance inclusivity, and improve infrastructure.
- **Long-Term:** Institutionalize sustainability models, embed innovation, and integrate private provision into national education planning.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

Private schools and colleges are transformative partners in achieving inclusive, equitable, and quality education. Strengthening governance, compliance, and quality assurance will position Malawi’s private education sector as a credible contributor to national and continental development agendas.

## About the Author

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is an education strategist, scholar, and consultant with expertise in quality assurance systems, curriculum design, and governance in higher education and industry. He has contributed significantly to regional education reform, serving as part of the development teams for the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (2015) and the Malawi Qualifications Framework (2019). His leadership in designing the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance for Higher Education and Industry further demonstrates his commitment to advancing institutional legitimacy and academic excellence.

Dr. Msukuma's scholarly portfolio includes 14 published books covering diverse areas such as teacher education, higher education governance, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), early childhood development, and research methodology. His publication *Equity and Quality in Basic Education: Assessing Quality Assurance Systems for Gender and Rural Inclusion in Malawi* reflects his dedication to inclusive education and evidence-based policy reform. He has also supervised postgraduate research, evaluated academic proposals, and provided consultancy services to institutions seeking to strengthen governance, compliance, and sustainability frameworks.

As a recognized authority in quality assurance, curriculum reform, and institutional development, Dr. Msukuma continues to influence education policy and practice across Sub-Saharan Africa. His work aligns closely with Malawi's Vision 2063 and the National Education Sector Plan (2020–2030), positioning private and public institutions as transformative partners in delivering globally competent and locally grounded graduates. His scholarship and consultancy engagements underscore a lifelong commitment to educational leadership, humanistic transformation, and the pursuit of excellence in governance and quality assurance.

## INSIDE THIS RESEARCH ARTICLE

- Governance Challenges in Private Education
- Compliance and Quality Assurance Strategies
- Comparative Insights from Zambia, Mauritius, and Lesotho

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Zizwa Msukuma is an education strategist, scholar, and consultant specializing in quality assurance, curriculum design, and governance. He has contributed to the development of the *Lesotho Qualifications Framework* and *Malawi Qualifications Framework*, and authored numerous influential books on teacher education, TVET governance, and equity in basic education.

Dr. Msukuma's expertise supports educational transformation across Southern Africa.

For inquiries, contact:

[zizwamsukuma@gmail.com](mailto:zizwamsukuma@gmail.com)

*Advancing Educational Excellence – Promoting Inclusive  
Development*

## HARMONISING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION SECTOR: SHARPENING THE BRIDGES – THE 15 BRIDGES OF TRANSFORMATION



In 2015, I stood at a crossroads in Malawi's education system. Policies were drafted with brilliance, yet classrooms struggled to catch up. Teachers were trained, but not fully equipped. Systems were established, but accountability was fragile.

At that moment, I picked up a pen. I chose not merely to write textbooks, but to build bridges — bridges that connect vision to practice, policy to classrooms, and learners to opportunity.

### **Bridges 1–3: Foundations of Leadership and Teaching**

I began with the people who shape every child — teachers and leaders. Every child's journey begins with those who guide them.

- a) Teacher Education and Quality Assurance
- b) Accreditation, Governance and TQM
- c) Cross-Sectoral Quality Assurance and Leadership

If the foundation is weak, the whole house trembles. These bridges strengthen the hands that shape the future.

## **Bridges 4–7: Equity Across the Learning Continuum**

Then I reached the youngest and the most vulnerable. From nursery to workshop to lecture hall, no learner must be left behind.

- a) Early Childhood Development
- b) Governance and Innovation in TVET
- c) Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Industry
- d) Quality Assurance, Equity, and Teacher Competence

These bridges ensure that the youngest and most vulnerable are not forgotten.

## **Bridges 8 & 14: Tools for Inquiry**

I handed tools to the next generation of thinkers. A nation that cannot ask good questions will never find bold answers.

- a) Research Methodology Manual: A Scholarly Guide to Academic Inquiry
- b) Research Roadmap: A Scholarly Guide to Foundations, Methodology, and Inquiry

These bridges equip the next generation of thinkers with the tools of inquiry.

## **Bridges 9–11: Reform with a Destination**

I then looked to the future. Reform must be purposeful, aligned to Vision 2063, SDG 4, and AU/CESA.

- a) Skills for the Future: Reforming Secondary Education
- b) Reforming Education in Malawi: Foundations, Priorities, and Strategic Pathways

### c) Quality Assurance Model/Approach for HEIs

These bridges ensure that syllabi, systems, and strategies converge on transformation.

### **Bridges 12–13: Governance and Stewardship**

Finally, I strengthened the hands that steer. Vision without governance is fragile; policy without compliance is hollow.

a) Transforming Education Systems: Leadership, Governance, and QA for Sustainable Change

b) Managing Private Schools and Colleges: A Practical Handbook for Quality and Compliance

### **Bridge 15: Harmonising External Quality Assurance Frameworks**

The fifteenth bridge consolidates the journey: *integrating Institutional Audits, Programme Accreditation, and Tuition Provider Oversight, underpinned by Monitoring & Evaluation*. This bridge ensures coherence, efficiency, and responsiveness in higher education quality assurance — linking institutions, programmes, and providers into one unified system.

### **Summary**

15 books — 15 bridges: from **policy to practice**, from **classroom to cabinet**, from **Malawi to the region and beyond**. This journey is a testament that education reform is not an abstract ideal, but a lived commitment. Each bridge (book) is sharpened for the task ahead: to carry learners, teachers, leaders, and nations across the gap between aspiration and achievement.

They are not just books on a shelf. They are tools, blueprints, and a declaration: **Education must drive equity, innovation, and sustainable development.**

That is the Z.I.Z.W.A way — *Zealous, Insightful, Zephyr, Wise, Anointed.*  
One book at a time, one system transformed.