



# Leadership Practices and School Improvement in Malawi: A Qualitative Exploration

Banda Kamanga<sup>1</sup>, Kasambara Simani<sup>2</sup>, Chinyengoowe Mwanza<sup>2,3</sup>, Phiri Chiyaka<sup>4,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Malawi

<sup>2</sup> Mzuzu University

<sup>3</sup> Department of Advanced Studies, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST)

<sup>4</sup> Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST)

<sup>5</sup> Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR)

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**Correspondence:** [bkamanga@yahoo.com](mailto:bkamanga@yahoo.com)

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## Author notes

*Banda Kamanga is affiliated with University of Malawi and focuses on Education research in Africa.*

*Kasambara Simani is affiliated with Mzuzu University and focuses on Education research in Africa.*

*Chinyengoowe Mwanza is affiliated with Department of Advanced Studies, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) and focuses on Education research in Africa.*

*Phiri Chiyaka is affiliated with Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) and focuses on Education research in Africa.*

## Abstract

Leadership practices play a pivotal role in school improvement across various educational contexts, including Malawi where effective leadership can significantly enhance student outcomes and institutional efficacy. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilising in-depth interviews with school leaders, observations at selected schools, and document reviews. Data analysis involves thematic coding and cross-case synthesis to identify common themes and patterns related to leadership practices and their effects on educational improvement. Analysis of the collected data revealed that effective leadership was characterized by a strong focus on community engagement, fostering an inclusive school culture, and continuous professional development for teachers, which collectively contributed to improved academic performance and student well-being across the sampled schools. The findings suggest that while traditional top-down approaches may not be universally applicable in Malawian contexts, alternative leadership strategies emphasising collaboration and empowerment can lead to meaningful improvements in educational outcomes. School administrators and policymakers should consider adopting more inclusive and collaborative leadership models, alongside ongoing professional development initiatives for educators, as key drivers of effective school improvement in Malawi. Leadership practices, School improvement, Educational outcomes, Qualitative study, Malawi

**Keywords:** *African contexts, Leadership effectiveness, Qualitative methods, School improvement, Stakeholder engagement, Transformational leadership, Contextualized education*

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